



The Boy
Who Looked Ahead

JOHN TALBOT SMITH



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THE BOY WHO LOOKED AHEAD

THE BLACK CARDINAL

BY

JOHN TALBOT SMITH

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A novel that is decidedly good—good in its absorbing interest, good as literature. The heroine is Elizabeth Patterson-Bonaparte, the Baltimore girl whom Prince Jerome Bonaparte married, a marriage the great Napoleon refused to recognize. The scenes in Baltimore, Paris, Rheims, and the palace of Fontainebleau scintillate with the Napoleonic glory. The American girl moves amid the great with poise and success, her snappy wit and American temper making friends everywhere.

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THE BOY WHO LOOKED AHEAD

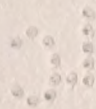
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THE BOY WHO LOOKED AHEAD

CHAPTER I

THE RESCUE

WAWAYANDA sat down for a breathing spell on a rock at the base of the cliff, the most exhausted brave in his tribe. The hunters and trappers of the wild region of the Mohawk were on his trail, close at hand. Perhaps he had ten minutes to rest, and ten more to climb the steep path up the cliff, before the enemy caught up with him. If he could reach the thicket above the Falls, there was a chance for escape; if he could not, then he must die by fire, as many a white man had died under him. That was the law, and he did not complain. He breathed so hard that the wild things in the bushes fled into secret places. After a little he recovered and could look about him.

What a wild place! The banks of the river rose a hundred feet into the air, straight as a wall; the river-bed was dry, except in the middle where a cut carried a narrow, deep stream; and above him were the Falls of the Mohawk, in winter a terrible sight, just now as dry as the bed of the river, except in the very center, where a few streams of muddy water trickled down into a basin. He knew that basin well; for there his tribe disported in the pleasant summer days, fishing and swimming. Tall pines grew along the high banks, and deep thickets under them offered shelter to hunted warriors.

When he had got breath again, he started to climb the path which ran slantwise along the face of the cliff. To a "paleface" it looked like a desperate climb; but to Wawayanda it was easy, except for the way it used his clothes. His beautiful feather headdress, which he had fashioned himself in the winter, fell off twice, got in his eyes every minute, and almost perished; and his suit of deerskin was a sight with dirt when he got to the top. He was a very particular Indian, and stopped to brush himself off before diving into the thicket. Fatal moment! The pursuing party was nearer than he had dreamed, and caught sight of him from below. He answered their wild shouts of triumph with the war-whoop of his tribe, fixed an arrow to his bow and let fly at them as they gathered about the foot of the cliff. They promptly scattered, concealing themselves in the bushes; but he kept them at bay a long time, by rolling rocks down on them whenever they attempted to scale the cliff. And he laughed heartily to see them dodge the missiles.

It took the party of whites some time to learn that while Wawayanda held his position they could not cope with him. The only plan left was for them to divide into two parties,—one to ascend the Falls to the north, the other to climb up lower down to the south, and then close in on him. The moment they divided, Wawayanda gave a war-whoop of ridicule and plunged into the thicket. They were free to mount by the path, which the second division took, while the first rushed on to the Falls to head off the fugitive that way. But now Wawayanda had his second wind, and snapped his fingers at the pursuit. He said to himself in the peculiar language of the Mohawk tribe:

"Those yaps couldn't catch up with a mud-turtle!"

Clearly he scorned his pursuers, and therein he blundered. He felt too sure of himself. The underbrush grew so densely about him that a hunted In-

dian might hide forever in it. Wawayanda did not intend to hide while his wind remained. He would pretend to hide, and leave the pursuers to wait for him as long as they felt like waiting. They did not number more than ten stalwart hunters and trappers of the Mohawk country; but they had chased him so often and so vainly that their spirit was up this time to put an end to his sneering triumph forever. He knew that, and yet he did a foolish thing. Instead of hiding in the underbrush until dark, when he could have stolen away easily, he crawled through it to the river.

Above the Falls, the bank sloped gently to the riverbed, which was just as dry here as below. About a quarter of a mile north, there was a bathing-pool known to the tribe as the Sand Bar, a pretty place shut in by willow bushes, with deep water and a sandy bottom. Wawayanda determined to reach this pleasant spot and have a comfortable swim, instead of hiding in the dark, damp, stifling underbrush. He moved swiftly and cautiously to the place, waited in the bushes ten minutes, looked all around for signs of his foes, listened with his ear to the ground. All was quiet and peaceful, and he laughed to himself at the thought of the white men watching the bushes farther down, in the hope of seeing him crawl out of his hiding-place. With great care he took off his feather headdress and hung it on a tree, also his deerskin suit with the fringe, which he placed tenderly on a bough, and slipped into the cool water.

He made no sound, no splash, and kept near the bank, just enjoying himself. Twice he had to hug himself to keep from laughing out loud at the hunters and trappers watching for him. He could see them stationed at different points, and hear Red Mike, the leader of the band, giving instructions. After kicking around for half an hour or more, he tried floating. How pleasant to lie in the water, as if on an

air cushion, arms outstretched, nose and mouth just over the surface, feeling like a bird going to sleep! When tired of this, he stood up and rubbed the water from his eyes. Was he dreaming, or had he rubbed some spell into his eyes? On the bank stood eight solemn forms in the costumes of white men. One of them had just seized his clothes and headdress, and the eight stood like statues grinning at him, waiting for him to come to shore. All was not lost yet, and Wawayanda had sworn never to be taken alive. He turned about and dashed for the dry bed of the river. Too late! Two hunters had slipped out of their clothes and into the stream while he was doing the floating act, and were waiting for him. He was trapped! With a yell of defiance he shouted in the language of his tribe:

“You yaps will have to fight for it!”

They were ready for his challenge, and fell upon him as he made a dash for the far side of the pool. By just grabbing his heels and pulling him under water, they soon subdued him, and loud was their laughter as he was dragged ignominiously ashore. In their laughing the white men seemed to have no dignity; for they lay down on their backs, rolled over, beat the air with their hands, screamed and danced, in their joy at his capture. It took four men to hold him. Wawayanda submitted to being bound to a tree with a rope, which first circled his waist, then gripped his arms behind him, travelled to his ankles and bound them, and then went three times around the tree.

“As he’s going to burn before noon,” said Red Mike, the leader, a coarse creature, “he doesn’t need any clothes. Good clothes too. We’ll put them up at auction.”

“I must die in my clothes,” said Wawayanda with dignity; “otherwise I won’t die.”

“Well, I suppose a chief must die in his whole out-

fit, so give him his togs," Red Mike commanded with much grumbling. "But all of you fellows stand about, and at the first sign of an attempt to escape kill him."

When he was dressed and tied again, the band went in swimming to take off the dust and weariness of the long pursuit, and to prepare themselves for burning the captive later on. They treated the poor Indian with ridicule, dancing about the tree and poking his ribs, while Red Mike recounted Wawayanda's boastings about never being captured, and never going to be captured.

"What have you got to say now? Weren't you caught like a fool-turkey at Thanksgiving?"

"I had to become foolish for you to catch me," said the Indian.

"Oh, give him twenty for that!" the band cried in chorus; and they danced about the tree, slapping and thumping him.

But Wawayanda neither dodged nor spoke a word. He stood against the tree, a hero even in his bonds.

When the hunters and trappers had dressed again, they ate a comfortable lunch; and each one stepped up to the captive, holding a sandwich or a cake under his nose, saying:

"Wouldn't you like to have it?"

When the lunch was over, the hunters and trappers gathered in a circle around the tree, and looked at the silent captive. They were a ferocious set, in their red shirts and trousers, their slouch hats and pistol belts. Red Mike looked like a pirate. A black whisker covered his face, and his red nose stuck out above it like a street lamp, so that even his men joked him on its color and size. He was the spokesman of the crowd.

"Well, boys," he began, "we've caught this tarnal critter at last, after he has killed and scalped the set-

tlers of the Mohawk valley for many years. His doom is now at hand. I vote that he be stripped of his headdress, scalped, and then burned, right where he stands."

"I don't see why you take my headdress," Wawayanda protested with anger. "It is the sign of my tribe and the sign of my victories."

"Oh, let him have the headdress!" said some of the hunters.

"No, sir!" Red Mike shouted. "Didn't Li Hung Chang lose the peacock feather when he lost his job? We must treat this Indian just the same as the Empress of China treated Li Hung Chang. All in favor say 'Aye.'"

The entire band supported Red Mike; and the proud head of the Indian drooped as the executioner snatched the feathered headdress from his brow and planted it firmly on the red locks of the leader. Red Mike laughed fiercely.

"Now get the wood and start the fire!" he cried.

It was a painful scene, except that the hunters and trappers laughed as they ran about gathering wood and piling it in a half circle about the doomed chief. They pinched him and poked him as they piled, and showed him how the flames would reach out for his legs first, and so roast him slowly. Red Mike directed the work, talking at the top of his voice, abusing some and praising others; smoothing his black whiskers and fixing his red nose as if it threatened to come off; and then laughing as if his sides would give way. And through all the cruel uproar Wawayanda gave no sign, uttered no protest: simply waited for the terrible end with the composure of his race.

When all was ready for the match, Red Mike sang out:

"Wawayanda, have you anything to say why sen-

tence of death by fire shall not be carried out according to the customs of the nation?"

The band cheered their leader, but the Indian remained silent with bowed head.

"Let her go!" shouted Red Mike; and almost immediately the pile leaped into flame, hiding the form of the poor victim from sight.

Red Mike looked with some anxiety at the blaze; but as it died down soon to a regular flame, they could see the Indian behind it. He had lost his attitude of firmness, and was gazing beyond them toward the woods. At the same moment a hunter yelled:

"Look out! Here comes McGinnis!"

There must have been some magic in the name, for without an instant's delay Red Mike and the band fled into the thicket and disappeared. And on their heels came a shouting man, behind him a silent man; and while one followed the band into the underbrush, the other kicked away the fire and snatched at the rope which bound the captive to the tree, exclaiming wildly as he did so at the horror of the scene.

But Wawayanda just pulled the rope off his form and threw it aside.

"There's no danger, Father Fleming," said he. "I'm not really tied, and the boys were just playing Injun and hunters. But now it's a real chase, I guess; for McGinnis knows the woods, and he's anxious to get hold of Red Mike before all the others."

CHAPTER II

A FINE BARGAIN

FATHER FLEMING'S face seemed rather stern as he looked at Wawayanda, and even the shrewd glance of the make-believe Indian could not see the twinkle in his eyes. He was still a young

man, spare in form, sharp and forceful in features, and his under lip pouted as if he were going to find fault severely. But he had a very kindly temper, which blazed up suddenly and died away as suddenly; and all the boys of the town feared him and loved him together. Still they never felt quite sure of him.

"If you will wash the war-paint off your face, I will know to whom I am talking," he said sharply.

"I'm Eddie Travers, Father," said the boy politely.

"But I can not be sure of that till I see the real face."

So Wawayanda found a piece of soap in his clothes, and washed the last trace of red skin and war-paint from a face which he turned to Father Fleming for inspection. It was a nice face, rather thoughtful for its age, with clear black eyes and a sweet mouth.

"I see you are Eddie Travers," the priest said gravely; "and will you please explain all this dangerous playing? I find you on the point of being burned to death, and a crowd of boys invading the gardens of Mr. McGinnis. It is this kind of work which usually ends in jail."

"We were just playing Injun," said Eddie. "We play it every other week, and each fellow in turn takes the part of Wawayanda. It's the same thing as hare and hounds, only we put on suits like this and take other names. I never got caught yet. Red Mike wanted bad to catch me this time, because I caught him last time."

"Red Mike? Was that the fellow with the nose and the whiskers?"

"He's Vin Radley," said Eddie; "and he's called Red Mike because that is the name of a bad man in a story. I was to blame for bringing the boys into Mr. McGinnis' garden. I didn't want to hide in the bushes for hours; so I stole up here to have a swim by myself, never thinking that the hunters and trappers would

catch on to the trick and follow me. That's how I got caught."

"But they really would not have burned you to death?" said Father Fleming.

"Oh, no! It was all just fun. We've all been burned to death — that is, all the good runners, I mean, — but we're alive yet. If Mr. McGinnis catches us to-day though, I guess there'll be some kind of murder."

At that moment the owner of the garden came out of the woods, puffing and snorting with feeling and exhaustion.

"It was no use," said he: "they all got away, and the devil himself would not have the wind or the tricks to catch that crowd. Father Fleming, I've laid for them all summer, set traps for them, tried everything, and I never come any nearer than this to the villains. Who's this boy?"

"The one they were burning to death," answered the priest.

"I'd have let him burn," said Mr. McGinnis, with contempt. "Since your Reverence saved him, I suppose you would object to me taking him into the barn and warming up his hide in imitation of a real fire?"

"I shall take him away with me, Mr. McGinnis, and therefore I object. But, as this is the honorable president of the Lookahead Club, I would like to know what you have against him, that you suggest a severe and disgraceful punishment."

"He can't have anything against me," said Eddie, calmly, "except that I come here to swim on the sandy bar. I never touched his garden, and I wouldn't eat a thing that grows in it if he gave me the whole outfit."

"Why wouldn't you?" the priest asked.

"Because he's too mean with his garden truck," said the boy. "He lets tomatoes rot, and apples and plums and pears lie on the ground, rather than give

them away. They're no use to him and no use to any one else."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed Mr. McGinnis, getting red in the face. "I don't need to let anything lie on the ground a minute, for you spalpeens pick them off the trees and the vines before they get ripe. I'd let you have the windfalls, if you'd take the trouble to ask for them. I'd agree to give you half the stuff that grows on the place, if you'd wait till they ripen; but you won't wait, and you steal what's no use to you and no use to any one else."

"I never stole anything but a swim," said Eddie; "and even that you have to steal from the owner of this place."

Mr. McGinnis burst into a fit of laughter, and even Father Fleming smiled. The boy did not know just what they laughed at, so he remained quiet.

"I think," said the priest, "that I will make an arrangement with you, Mr. McGinnis, to let the members of our club use this Sand Bar as a bathing place during the summer. We will hire it from you, and then see to it that no outsiders invade the premises. What do you think of that idea, Mr. President?"

"It would be just fine to have our own bathing beach," said Eddie, with joy.

"And could you keep the other fellows out?" said the gardener, who saw at once his own release from eternal guardianship over the fruits and vegetables.

"I am sure we could," said Eddie.

"Then here's a bargain," said Mr. McGinnis. "I'll let you have the Sand Bar all summer, and I'll let your boys have all the windfalls and the stuff I don't use or sell, if they will keep all other boys off the premises."

"Except as their guests," Father Fleming hinted.

"Why, of course, except as their guests; for the guests will behave like themselves," said Mr. McGinnis.

The bargain was struck on the spot; the gardener went back to his house; the priest and Eddie took the path that led to the town. There was no sign of the hunters and trappers anywhere. They had lost no time in putting a long distance between themselves and Mr. McGinnis. Under Red Mike's directions, they scattered through the underbrush as best they could, with orders to meet in Partridge's lot by noon. They were all in the lot by the time the priest and Eddie set out for the town.

"I think we made a pretty good bargain, Eddie," said Father Fleming.

"The best I ever heard of," said Eddie, with enthusiasm. "Why, it makes our club as swell as the yacht club! And, besides, we get enough tomatoes and pears and things to feed the crowd."

"It doesn't look as if Mr. McGinnis was quite as mean as you thought, does it?"

"I never thought he was that kind of a fellow. It seemed mean though, those fine apples and pears and plums — oh, such ripe plums, Father! — rotting on the ground, and our mouths just watering for them. Some of the boys took them anyway, and got a bad pinching."

"You see, it's the way one does things that counts. The boys invaded his garden and made him very angry. He lost a lot of stuff; but they got green fruit, rotten fruit, sometimes a wallop, and often jail. Now our bargain is fair and pleasant for both sides. You get a beach and plenty of fruit; he gets rid of the toughs and loafers, and the fights with them."

"It is the thing that counts, — the *way* that one does things," said Eddie. "Now, all this trouble to-day would never have happened if I had just stuck to my old plan of hiding in the bushes along the river. They run back to the canal, and a hundred men might beat them for a month and never catch you. But I

had to choose another way; I had to play another trick; and so we all got into trouble."

"But out of the trouble came the bargain," said the priest. "How do you make that out?"

"Because you were there, Father," said Eddie promptly and with admiration. "We chumps could never think of such a plan; and Mr. McGinnis would laugh at us, even if we did think of it."

"In this life good will come out of evil, if we set ourselves to look for it. God has so arranged. So we must never be discouraged over our blunders or our troubles, but set to work to find a way out of them."

"Oh, but that's true!" said Eddie. "And yet how long it takes to see how true it is!"

He fell to thinking of this strange thing — that out of evil good should be able to come; and the priest watched him as they walked, pleased to find the lad so thoughtful and sensible. When they had come in sight of Partridge's lot, he said:

"And how about the meeting to-night? Do you think it will be as bright and useful as the last one?"

"It ought to be," Eddie replied. "There will be two or three new candidates, and Harold Sullivan is ready to make his choice of a career; and then the visitor, who will make a speech; and the singing. I think it will turn out all right."

"The visitor will be there," said Father Fleming. "He is very much interested in the Lookahead Club, and wants to see how it works. If you have your part of the program sure, you may count on mine. And where do you go now?"

"I think the band will meet in the lot," said Eddie; "and I must report with the others. After the chase and the burning or whatever the wind-up is, we meet in some place and fix up everything for the next time."

"Good-bye, then!" said Father Fleming.

He turned off into the main road, while Eddie took a short cut to the meeting-place. Had he watched the priest for a few minutes, he would have seen a strange thing. Father Fleming walked on until he came to a little grove, into which he suddenly dodged, found a path that led to the river, and in a few minutes was standing within twenty feet of Red Mike and the band, with a screen of vines and bushes to keep him hidden. The mighty hunters and trappers had thrown aside their costumes, and were now everyday boys of Fallville. Red Mike had dropped his nose and whiskers, and was plain Vincent Radley, a tall boy with a large head, shock yellow hair, sharp blue eyes, a flat nose, and a wide mouth. He was making a speech to defend the capture of Wawayanda, because Eddie Travers would surely claim a foul, since McGinnis had rescued him, and had driven them away.

In the midst of his passionate argument Eddie Travers dashed into the circle with a ringing hurrah.

"No foul, no foul, no foul!" yelled Vincent.

"Fair, fair, fair!" replied Eddie. "I'm not going to claim a foul, but I ought to. Listen! What do you think? Guess three times what's happened."

He was so excited that the band caught the excitement and began to clamor wildly for the news. It seemed as if it would never be told,—the bargain with Mr. McGinnis, through the suggestion of Father Fleming. But somehow, amid indescribable noise, it came out, and the band went fairly mad. The one intelligible utterance of feeling came from Eddie, who managed to roar a motion and to have it carried unanimously.

"I move that hereafter and forever the gardener be known to our members as '*Mister McGinnis*,' and so called on all private as well as public occasions."

Father Fleming had to run deeper into the woods in order to laugh at his ease.

CHAPTER III

THE LOOKAHEAD CLUB

JUST as it grew dark that evening the members of the Lookahead Club assembled at the door of the hall, waiting for the sexton to light up and give the signal for admission. Every member was present long before the appointed hour, because a very distinguished gentleman had been invited to address the meeting; no less a personage than the Hon. James Sullivan, president of the Amateur Athletic Union of America, the greatest athletic authority in the nation. The boys were awed at the presence of such greatness in their small town, and at the power of Father Fleming which could secure it for his boys. Not far off, other boys lingered in the hope of an invitation to the meeting.

Vincent Radley wandered by and cast a scornful look at the crowd, because he did not believe in the Lookahead Club. The boys began to sing to him:

Don't you wish you could come in,—
Don't you wish you could come in?

He disdained to answer; but with half an eye you could see how he longed to get in, if only to feast his eyes upon the great man. But no stranger was admitted on this exceptional night.

Eddie Travers, as president, took the chair and called the meeting to order. Then he appointed a committee of three to go to Father Fleming's house and act as escort to the priest and the guest. When they returned, all the boys stood up and stretched their necks to see the visitor. Oh, what a splendid man! Tall and broad and well shaped, dressed in a gentleman's

evening costume (which was rarely seen in Fallville), with grayish hair, a ruddy, handsome, smiling face, and a dark mustache, he looked all that the boys had fancied him, and they greeted him with loud and long applause.

"Now, members of the Lookahead Club," said Father Fleming, "as our honored visitor is here for the special purpose of seeing how this club is managed, and what good it intends to do in the world, everything must go on as at any other meeting and at the end he will tell us just what he thinks of it."

So Eddie Travers called the meeting to order once more; and it was simply fine to see how cool that boy was right under the eyes of the visitor. Then the roll was called, the regular business transacted, and the new members called up for initiation. They numbered three, and ranged themselves in front of the platform, studying the visitor so hard that they forgot their part in the form.

Eddie Travers said:

"Is there any objection among the members to the admission of Brothers Cooke, Hanlon and Toolan, who have fulfilled the ordinary period of probation?"

No objection was made, and after a pause Eddie asked:

"Brothers, have you made up the account of your debt to your parents?"

"We have," said the three, taking each a document from their pockets.

"Read, Brother Cooke," said the president.

"Twelve years' support, clothes, medicine, doctor's bills and cash, amount to \$550," read Master Cooke from his paper. "Then \$300 more for the next three years before I go to work, which makes it \$850. Father says he won't take any interest, nor charge for rent and light and heat. He'll be satisfied with a note for \$850."

"Read, Brother Hanlon," said Eddie.

"Father said I could make out the same bill as Brother Cooke," replied the boy; "but he doesn't think I'll ever remember to pay it, I'm so forgetful."

"The club will remind you regularly," said Father Fleming.

"Read, Brother Toolan," continued the president.

"I'm nearly fourteen," said Brother Toolan, unrolling a paper filled with items; "and father says he charges me double because I've been sickly. Fourteen years' board and lodging, \$450; clothes, \$300; doctors and medicine, \$200; cash \$10 for picnics and fireworks; and interest to date, \$130. He wanted to add the cost of collecting — about \$500,— but mother said no. Total, \$1090."

"Mother was right, I think," said Father Fleming. "And, as I am responsible for these bills, I cut the amount down to \$800."

"You will now sign these notes," said the president; and the three new members signed their names to promissory notes, agreeing to pay to their parents within twenty years from date, without interest, the money expended on their support and education.

"These notes remain in my possession," said Father Fleming to the visitor. "Do I need to explain to you the reason for this ceremony? Hardly. So many boys forget all their fathers and mothers have done for them in their childhood, and never make any return either in love or cash for that great care, that our club has undertaken the task of educating themselves and their kind to a sense of responsibility in this matter. Some of the boys have begun to reduce their indebtedness. Harry Ludlow, stand up, please, and tell Mr. Sullivan where you stand on your note."

"I went to work last year," said Harry proudly, "at \$5 a week. Father charged me \$150 for board

and clothes, gave me \$10 to spend, and took the other \$100 on the debt."

"Isn't that a record?" said the priest.

Mr. Sullivan answered in a deep voice:

"Finest thing I ever heard of! When Harry grows bigger, I want him in my office, if his parents will let him come."

A hum of admiration and delight went through the room, and Harry Ludlow swelled with joy and pride.

"Every member of this club," Father Fleming said, "acknowledges his debt to his parents, and has signed a note promising to pay in time. An honest business man never forgets his obligations. As the chief aim of this society is to look ahead into the future, and to prepare for it, every member is urged to consider the trade, business, or profession which he intends or hopes to take up some day, and to announce his intention and his reasons for the same to his brothers."

"Brother Harold Sullivan!" said the president; and immediately a boy stood up, his eyes on the visitor, and the visitor's eyes on him.

"I am glad to meet a member of the Sullivan clan," said the great man.

"Thank you, sir!" Harold replied. He was a bright-looking boy of fifteen, daintily dressed, with thin, keen features, a slight voice, dark hair and eyes.

"What life-work have you chosen, Brother?" said the president.

"The banking business," he answered; and the boys began to whisper to him "sand bank" and "mud bank." But he ignored them.

"For what reasons?" asked the president.

"It's a good business," replied Harold. "There's lots of money in banks, and I heard a fellow say that the man who manages money, really manages everything else, if he does it right."

"What chance have you to take it up?" said the president.

"I have just got the promise of the next vacancy in our bank here."

"Very good, Harold!" observed Father Fleming. "And I am sure you will do honor to us in your career. Money is a great power, but it often destroys those who handle it. It is like powder and dynamite. You must be more careful, more watchful, more pious, in that business than in any other."

"Thank you!" said Harold; and all the boys whispered to him as he sat down perhaps one hundred 'Thank yous.'

"Perhaps Vincent Radley, if present, would explain to us his reason for taking up photography," said Father Fleming; and at once a silence fell on the room.

"He's given it up," said one boy after a pause.

"He's going to be whatever his mother doesn't want him to be," said another; and the president gravely added:

"I think he has left the society, and won't belong to it any more."

"He told me so," many voices chimed in.

"He wanted me to leave with him," said two boys together.

"He left just at the wrong time. He'd like to have been here to-night," came from many voices.

"Your compliment," said the priest to the visitor; "but you see we have a traitor and an enemy, who tries to break up the club. What is wrong with Vincent, boys?"

"Too fresh! Swelled head!" were the volunteered explanations.

"Has he persuaded any members to leave?" asked the priest.

"Not one," the president replied. "We stand by the flag."

Thereupon the boys broke into applause, and Father Fleming rose up to make the formal speech introducing the visitor.

"Yes, we stand by the flag," said he. "That's our motto. We have a good club, which is training our boys to look ahead in life, and to prepare themselves for the work that has to be done before they return to God. It will take more than one faithless member to injure it. But our distinguished guest this evening will say more about the club in a minute than I could say in a week. Mr. Sullivan is a man of the great world. Thirty years ago he was just where you are to-day. He had to begin. He had to look ahead. He will tell you all about it. You can see with your own eyes what he is to-day. He has a high and sure position, which pays him well; but he has to work to hold it nearly as hard as he worked to get it. I introduce to you my friend, and the friend of the boys and girls of America, who wants them all to grow up healthy, strong, cheerful, laborious, and good."

The great man was welcomed with cheers; and he made a long, beautiful speech, which a stenographer took down, and which Father Fleming had his best elocutionist speak at the next entertainment. He was delighted with the club and its name and its idea. Every boy should look ahead in life. The greater part of the trouble in the world came from looking back or not looking at all. Most people look where they are going; but also most people never know where they are going, so that they are not looking at any place in particular. The engineer in the locomotive of the express is always looking ahead. The pilot of the big steamship never takes his eyes off the path ahead. If they looked in the other direction, they would never get anywhere. If they did not look at all, the train or the ship would go to smash. All men are marching onward every day,—the children toward youth, the

youths toward manhood, the grown men toward old age, and all toward heaven. They must look ahead, or stumble and perish. The sooner they begin to look ahead, the better for them. Oh, what a fine speech! And at the close he said:

“I want to help Father Fleming in showing the boys how to look ahead; and so I will give six medals — two bronze, two silver, and two gold — to the best all-round athletes in this club next spring.”

Then everybody cheered; and the members fell into line, and were introduced to the great man by Father Fleming; and some had two hand-shakes with him before he finally went away.

CHAPTER IV

A BAD TEMPER

THE committee and the president escorted the great man to his carriage, for he had to return to New York that night; and the boys gave him three cheers as the coach drove off, with Father Fleming and Eddie Travers on the inside. The boys were just breathless with astonishment at the honor conferred upon their president. Oh, what bliss to ride all the way to the station with the greatest man in the country except the President! Eddie felt as if he had been eating ice-cream all day, as near the brass band as possible. Father Fleming had just said to him, as he shoved him into the carriage:

“It is your duty to accompany your guest to the train.”

“I want to compliment you on your club,” said Mr. Sullivan. “It is the finest idea in clubs that I have ever known. To teach the boys to look ahead in life,

to make them understand their serious obligations to their parents, and also to get them to discharge those obligations, is simply fine. And, by the way, I did not hear, and I would like to, what trade or profession this young man has chosen."

"Tell him, Eddie," said the priest; "and tell him why."

"I chose the grocery business," Eddie replied; "first because I like it, and then because it's a good business. People will always want groceries. And it's easy to start in it, because you can begin with a few things, and work up to the biggest and best."

"Quite right, very shrewd, shows observation," said Mr. Sullivan. "And what is your bill to your parents, if I may ask?"

"I have none, because my parents died long ago," answered the boy.

"So that leaves Eddie free from the very start," the priest said. "He was brought up with the Sisters from the time he was a baby, and it's only within the last three years that he found a home."

"That explains it," said Mr. Sullivan. "He was lucky to get in with the Sisters. Well, now, my boy" (and Mr. Sullivan took Eddie's hands and patted them), "as soon as you are ready for the grocery store, just write to me, and I'll give you a few tips that will be as good as a thousand dollars to you. That is, if you still hold the good opinion of Father Fleming."

"Thank you!" said Eddie, fervently.

But on the way home in the coach, having thought the matter over in his own way, he asked a question of the priest.

"How can Mr. Sullivan do anything for me and Harry Ludlow, as he said? He must be a very busy man, and we live here in Fallville, and he goes round to lots of clubs, and promises the same thing to other fellows. How can he do such things? I suppose it's

kindness on his part, but we mustn't count too much on it."

And then Father Fleming laid his hand on Eddie's knee and said impressively:

"Do you think for a moment that so great a man would promise what he can't perform? Or that he is a 'jollier,'—one who means only half what he says?"

"No, I don't, Father. But how can he keep so many promises?"

"I suppose," replied Father Fleming, sadly, "that he does not need to keep one-third of them. The boys forget them first, or turn out nobodies, and never ask for his help, because they know they are not worth it. But you should remember, Eddie, that Mr. Sullivan knows hundreds of business men, and hears every day of many vacant places. He told me only to-night that he could find twenty jobs a week for the right kind of boys and men, but it is impossible to get the right kind. See Vincent Radley! He has gone wrong, and sneers at his own chances. It's the same way with many others. So Mr. Sullivan makes promises to encourage every boy, but he knows that the right sort will never be so numerous as to embarrass him. And what is the matter with Vin?"

"Bugs," answered Eddie, with decision. "He's full of them. He knows everything without being told. He thinks he's *it*."

"Well, get after him, Eddie. Don't let him get away from us. He's got fine stuff in him, but that conceit will kill him if it goes much further."

"It's killing Harold, too. But I guess after a little trouble they'll come out all right. Of course they'll get the trouble."

Father Fleming got out at the Rectory, and sent Eddie home in the coach. The boy felt like a millionaire as it rolled along the avenue, with its lamps gleaming, and the musical beat of the hoofs on the pavement.

When the horses swept into simple Cataract Street, and up to the Radley door, people stared, the children cried out, "A wedding!" and a crowd greeted him as he descended. Everybody laughed as the coach rolled away, and some jeered good-naturedly because it was only Eddie Travers.

The old-fashioned houses on Cataract Street had front steps with side seats, where the simple people sat on pleasant evenings. The roar of the Mohawk Falls could be heard like the drone of an organ; and when the wind blew from the east, a slight mist from the whirling rapids below quite filled the air.

Two women sat on the stoop as Eddie mounted it.

"Quite a gentleman we have, coming home in his carriage," said one pleasantly, while the other laughed in a harsh way.

"Some day," said Eddie gravely, "I'll drive up here in just such a coach, Aunt Bertha; and half of it will be yours."

"I'm sure of it, and you won't be a bit more welcome then than you are this minute, son."

"Are the boys around?"

"Upstairs, scheming something important," was the answer.

As he went in, the other woman said crossly:

"You are spoiling that conceited little upstart, Aunt Bertha. The airs of him just weary me, as if he came from a palace instead of the poorhouse."

"You should be careful about making mean speeches, Helen. They are something like curses, in the way they come home to roost. You may have them some day for dessert."

Eddie heard but did not heed. Helen Sullivan was occasionally kind to him, and her brother was his chum. So what did her bitter speeches matter, since she was a young woman, very much in love with her own fine qualities, blood, and fortune; or, as Eddie phrased it in

explaining her, "very much stuck on herself"? He had no claim on her regard: he was just a poor boy whom Aunt Bertha had taken from the orphan asylum, because his mother had been her friend. She had given him a home, and he had paid his way in love, service, and cash, from the day its doors opened to him. He was used to bitter speeches. Made by boys, the offenders had to fight him; made by a woman, the only defence was silence.

He found Vincent Radley and Harold Sullivan in the common room used by them for study, off which were ranged the little bedrooms of the three boys. They greeted him by rising and bowing to the ground with their hands flat on the floor. He replied in the same fashion.

"Most worthy president of the cross-eyed club," said Vin, "did you see the big gun safe on the train?"

"Why can't you hide your jealousy for one night?" replied Eddie, in his cool voice and direct way, so that Vincent turned furiously red. "If you want to know, I rode to the train with Mr. Sullivan, saw him on it, saw it move away, rode back with Father Fleming, told him about your bugs, and then rode in the coach straight to our door. There's nothing cross-eyed about me or my club."

"It's a baby show!" Vin shouted.

"You're not long out of it," rejoined Harold, with a laugh.

"I got out as soon as I saw what it was. First money I get I'll spend it on rattles and bottles, and present them to the club."

"How sarcastic! We don't care, because you'd have given all the rattles and bottles you'll ever buy just to shake hands with that grand man."

And because Eddie spoke this truth with emphasis, the irritation of Vincent rankled and increased the

more, even when Eddie tried a softer tone, and showed him what he had lost in leaving the society.

"Father Fleming says that Mr. Sullivan will be glad to help every decent fellow that comes out of the Lookahead Club," Eddie continued, feeling that it was useful to say a word in opposition to Vincent, because it might steady Harold's wavering resolution.

"We got along without any looking ahead before, and I guess we can do the same now," Vincent growled.

"Mr. Sullivan said he never heard of a better club in his life, because boys need to be shown how to prepare for work, and what they owe to their parents."

"Of course that's what tickles parents," said Vin savagely,—“to be told we are in debt to them and that we must pay it back. It's a wrong idea. Isn't it the duty of the parents to pay for our bringing up? And if it's their duty, why should we pay them for it?”

This argument paralyzed the others so that they made no answer; and, seeing his advantage, Vincent began to spout like a pump in a most pompous way:

"I don't pay back any money to my parents; and when I want advice on my future business, I'm going to business men. They know what's what in Fallville and everywhere else."

"Where do you leave Mr. Sullivan? Isn't he a business man?" said Harold.

"He is, but he just said what Father Fleming wanted him to say."

"And where do you leave Father Fleming?" said Eddie. "Isn't he a man who knows what we all need to start in life?"

"I tell you," repeated Vincent, "that I'm going to business men when I start in business, and I'm going to do my own looking ahead. No more travelling with babies for me. No more 'guff' from great men. I had a talk with Sam Tully at the depot, and he told me

that the man who stands on his own two feet and on his own ground is worth all the ten million men who don't."

"Of course he had you in his mind," said Eddie. "In your own mind you're better than twenty million."

Whereupon Vincent made a wild attack on Eddie, who defended himself bravely, until Harold began to thump them both, when all three got so tangled up with one another that they came with a crash to the floor, kicking, struggling, and laughing.

Mrs. Radley came out of the shadows near the door and stood looking at them with a reproving air. They got up sheepishly and remained standing.

"Even if it's vacation," said she, "you must not turn the house into a barn. I am ashamed of you, Vincent, for your talk this evening. I heard every word of it, and I must say I never listened to anything more foolish. Your talk about life shows how little, how very little, you know about it. I didn't know you had left the boys' club. Why didn't you tell me? And why did you leave?"

"Because I don't like the babies in it, and because I don't want any steering when I begin to work, and because I'm going to travel with men."

"But you might have told me, or asked my opinion, son."

Vincent shook his head and put on a hard look, which meant that his mother's opinion did not interest him. She sighed and went out quietly, after ordering them to bed. Harold and Vincent smiled at this apparent surrender of the mother to the son.

"If you were my son," Eddie said in a whisper, "you'd go to bed with a red skin and a sore one."

The others made faces at him, and in dumb show described him as a perfect lady and an old grandmother, and a hardshell fish commonly known as a lobster.

Then they went to their rooms in silence, said their prayers, and went to bed.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER DESERTER

EDDIE TRAVERS was very much in love with the home which Mrs. Radley had generously given him, and deeply attached to Harold and Vincent. He had been so long without a real home — so long in a great building like a factory, with immense corridors and rooms, where everything was on a large scale,— that this two-story wooden house, with a front stoop and a garden at the rear, with pretty little rooms, neatly furnished, seemed to him like a toy; and he never tired of cleaning it, arranging it, weeding the garden, bringing wild flowers to ornament it, keeping the fires going, and doing all the chores. He did the work of the other boys as well as his own.

“Why shouldn’t he?” Miss Sullivan said. “It’s only paying back a little for a good deal. He’d be in the asylum yet only for Aunt Bertha.”

“I don’t like your speeches or your feeling about Eddie,” Aunt Bertha said in reply. “He loves the house and the boys. If Vincent and Harold cared for their home half as much as he does, it would be better for them and for us.”

“Oh, of course, take his part!” Helen Sullivan said pettishly. “You and Father Fleming seem daft on the perfections of the little upstart.”

As a matter of fact, the young lady thought it an outrage for the boys to select Eddie as the president of the Lookahead Club while her handsome brother was a member. It soothed her feelings somewhat when Harold got his position in the bank.

The boy made careful preparations for his first appearance in the great institution, and the entire household helped him. Eddie polished his shoes, Vincent arranged his tie, and his sister bought him a new pin for the tie and the occasion. The boys had a feeling of envy at his luck, for they still had to go to school another year. He looked so smart, in his natty suit and spotless linen, that to their eyes it really seemed as if he were already a wealthy banker.

Harold had no doubt of his ability to reach the presidency of the bank.

"Some day you'll see me signing my name to checks for a million," he said.

"Look out it isn't other people's millions," retorted Vincent.

It made them all feel good to be connected with a bank so closely; and every night Harold had to describe how bankers appeared at close view, what they said, where they took lunch, how money looked in piles, and how the great safes kept it safely from thieves. They felt sure that so bright a boy so well dressed and so polite would soon become cashier.

Vincent grew restless, however, over his cousin's glory. He was three inches taller, weighed fifteen pounds more, and had a brighter mind than Harold. It was humiliating that he should still be going to school, when this slight lad worked and lived like a man; and he confided to Eddie his intention to secure a good place as soon as possible, and leave school without notifying his mother.

"Don't, unless you can get as good a place as Harold has," said Eddie.

"Of course not. I want a better one," Vincent replied.

He was not thinking of that point at all till Eddie brought it to his mind. He saw then that he must really get a better place, more profitable and honorable,

or take any amount of chaffing from his cousin. It would not do for the bigger man to take the smaller position. So that argument kept him at school, when an appeal to his good sense, his respect for his mother, or anything else, would have been useless.

Vincent had a strong will and a foolish mind. He could never learn anything from the advice of his friends or the examples of life. He was of that unfortunate kind which has to learn everything by bitter experience. Even then, experience had to hit him with a club to make him understand. He was now bent on going to work, when his mother wished him to remain at school. She knew that opposition would not hinder him from doing what he had set his stubborn mind on; but she accepted Eddie's hint, and took means to prevent him from getting a better place than Harold's. In vain Vincent went about the town quietly seeking a respectable job in a bank or lawyer's office or large store. No one wanted him, because his mother quietly gave her reasons, and he was none the wiser. He succeeded in another matter, however. He coaxed Harold to leave the boys' club.

Eddie Travers fought hard against that matter. While the summer lasted and the members of the club had the use of the Sand Bar, Vin's persuasion did not count. When, however, the bathing season closed and the garden dried up, when Harold noticed more clearly the difference between the elegant quarters of the bank and the rude rooms of the club, between the officers of the bank and the officers of the club, he felt how much beneath him was this old association. He listened to Vincent willingly. Mrs. Radley set her face against it and used many arguments. Eddie urged him to remain.

"Who knows when you will need our help?" said he. "You may lose the place in the bank somehow. It might burn down. The thirty-second cousin of the

president might ask for your job. Then you would have the club to fall back on."

"Don't worry, sonny," said Harold, who now looked down on a mere boy like Eddie,— "don't worry, sonny. I have a good thing, I know it, and I won't lose it."

"You are so sure that I wouldn't be surprised if you *did* lose it. It's the very certain people that often get left. And, anyway, the club is a good thing to have at your back."

"I wasn't aware of the fact," Harold said grandly, using the words which the cashier often used. "The club is all very well, but I have no further use for it."

"La-de-dah! Mercy preserve us!" said Eddie in imitation.

"Well, the fact is I've outgrown the kids' club, and I'm going to choose a man's club for mine. Aunt Bertha and Father Fleming want me to stay, and I'm going to stay to please them. But the minute I get a decent excuse, good-bye, Willie!"

So Eddie saw that Vincent Radley had triumphed; but he kept on fighting, because Father Fleming had set his face against desertion, and against the influence of Vincent, which threatened to inflict some injury on the Lookaheads. It was the duty of the leader to lead. He must fight to the last ditch. And he did, but Helen Sullivan finally overthrew him. The more she studied her brother, the more she admired him. They were the last of their family. Harold was a good, lovable fellow, but he had as many faults as there are pins in a pincushion. Helen did not spend any time removing them. Her chief pleasure seemed to be to add to them. She believed in native pride, in select company; and she hoped some day to live in a house four rooms deep, provided by her brother the banker. She did not like Cataract Street, even though it looked out on the wonderful Falls of the Mohawk, and was wet by the spray of the cataract. There were many vulgar

people on it, at whom she never looked, even if they did attend the same church. When Harold secured his place in the bank, she made up her mind to secure a different home, to cut off all connection with the past, and to move up to a glorious future, half of which would be spent in the aristocratic section of the town, and the other half at the seashore. She encouraged Harold in his defection, and he was just waiting for that encouragement.

"For one thing," she said, "I would never belong to a society which had a pauper as its president."

"It isn't that," Harold interposed. "Eddie is a good fellow, and we're all glad to have him for president."

"He's not a pauper," said Aunt Bertha.

"But he *was*," Helen persisted.

"It was not his fault," observed Aunt Bertha. "There is no disgrace attached to it. The boy pays his way; and what would we ever do without him here?"

"Of course," said Harold. "Eddie's great, does all the work we should be doing, runs the club to suit Father Fleming. I'm leaving because I must now associate with men, not with mere boys."

Helen looked at him with pride, his work in the bank had made him so manly and stylish; but Mrs. Radley just laughed, half in fun, half in despair. She was on the losing side. Her son and her nephew were of little or no comfort to her; while the stranger, this orphan whom she had taken in, thought of her first, and deferred to her in all things. Her distress touched Harold, and he delayed his desertion for a time — until Helen took Eddie aside and gave him a piece of her very small mind, of a character which would put him in his proper place, as a pauper who had no right to interfere with the lives of loftier people, simply because Father Fleming had made him what he should not, the

president of an insignificant society. So Harold withdrew decently, sending in his resignation, with thanks for past benefits and good wishes for its future success. Eddie described the affair to Father Fleming.

"His sister did it," said Eddie. "She told me a pauper had no business to interfere in the doings of respectable people, and to keep out. She is always throwing 'pauper' at me, and so are other people. Why is it, Father?"

"Because the mind in these people is of low quality," said the priest. "You must get used to it. It will be thrown at you till you die. If you get rich, the mean-minded will tell everywhere that you lived in an orphan asylum. If you remain poor, they will tell you nothing better is to be expected from you. But remember: the people who talk in that fashion are not worth noticing. The real people, the thoughtful and kind and sensible, will esteem you the more for your humble beginning."

Eddie had no hard feelings against Miss Sullivan. He simply wondered why such people were made, and why they should consider misfortune something to be scorned instead of pitied. He was more grieved at the loss of his two chums to the club,—a loss which would be followed by many defections, and do harm to the good work of Father Fleming. He had made up his mind that Vincent should bring his hostility to the club to an end, or stand a wallop; but in that matter he had to be careful, because Father Fleming would not tolerate such a defence of his pet society.

CHAPTER VI

PERSUADING AN ENEMY

EVERY day Eddie found some proof of Vincent's enmity to the club which he had deserted. One boy after another fell away from the ranks; and the defection could always be traced to the direct influence or the arguments or the ridicule of this stubborn lad. He concealed his work, however, as best he could, for fear of consequences, and denied any evil intention against the peace and health of the Look-aheads. Eddie tried persuasion, for they were good friends.

"We have lost ten members," he said one night, as they sat in the common room, after studies were over. "I think we're going to lose more, but I'm doing my best to stop it. Why can't you let us alone?"

"This is a free country," said Vincent. "You are free to start a club, I am free to break it up. It can't be much of a club if I can break it up, can it?"

"The members can't be much," said Eddie, "if they let you. But I've seen a baby smash things that were worth a good deal. A silly person with a match could burn down the White House. Yet the White House is a pretty big thing."

"Your members aren't much," replied Vincent, "since they let me smash their club. That's right, and so they don't deserve to have a club."

"What have we ever done to you? Weren't you treated right when you were a member?"

"You had to treat me right, because I wouldn't stand for anything else. But don't charge me with breaking up your club, because I don't bother my head about it a minute. If my criticism changes a fellow's mind,

and he quits, that's not my fault and it's not my intention. I'm not going around worrying babies."

That was all the satisfaction Eddie could get out of him, and Harold did not succeed any better. The evil work went on; and Eddie had to think very hard to get ahead of the schemes of the enemy, and to forestall him by watching the boys whom he influenced. At last he decided to tell Vin's mother about it, and to see if she could not hinder her son from injuring the society.

Mrs. Radley was not at all blind to the glaring faults of her only child, but she had no skill or tact in managing him. Eddie's story grieved her to the heart.

"Oh, who would believe that Vincent would stoop to such wickedness?" said she, in her astonishment. "The poor priest doing his best to keep the boys together, and my son playing the devil's part in opposing him! O Eddie! I begin to fear that his lack of sense and his obstinacy will bring misfortune on him and me. I get more comfort out of you, the stranger, than out of him, my own flesh and blood. And I'm praying for him night and day these fifteen years."

Vincent knew, from her mournful expression that night, what was in store for him, but he was not prepared for the actual storm. She could bear with his faults and his delinquencies, but this interference with a pious work enraged her; and when she called him aside after tea, and stood looking at him with a terrible thought in her mind, she lost her self-control, seized him suddenly by the collar and shook him to his knees. Her white face and blazing eyes, the suddenness of the assault where he had expected nothing more than tears and complaints, frightened the boy.

"Have I brought into the world a devil?" said she, shaking him. "Isn't it bad enough to be complaining about you so often, to get no comfort or satisfaction out of my own child? Must I also bear the shame of

seeing you fight the priest in his good work? Must you be doing the devil's work? Listen! I would sooner see you dead than I'd permit that disgrace."

Vincent broke loose and jumped to his feet, angry and mortified.

"That's Eddie Travers' story!" he exclaimed. "Just because I told a few fellows that I didn't like the club, and some of them left, he's gone about talking of opposition, and making threats. I'm not opposing Father Fleming's work. I don't give a rap for the club. And I'm not going to be treated like a slave, and flung around the room on my knees, and charged with being the devil's mate, and everything!"

"Do you deny it?" said the astonished woman.

"Of course I deny it!" he shouted. "I don't deny having said things, just as any fellow would. But I deny trying to break up the club, and coaxing other fellows to leave it; and I'm going to see if Eddie Travers or any other chap can come and tell my own mother lies about me."

"Eddie tells no lies," said Mrs. Radley, firmly. "He may be mistaken, and I hope he is. It's a hard thing for a mother to say, but I'd take his word before yours."

Vincent accepted the rebuke meekly, because she had the evidence, and he was glad that the storm had broken so quickly. His conscience troubled him. It was not pleasant to be connected with the devil in his evil works, and he knew perfectly well that he deserved the charge. But he would not admit it to himself. Instead, he preferred to be very angry with Eddie for "slandering him," as he complained; and he worked the harder to influence some boys to keep out of the club, and the members to leave it.

Eddie decided, after two months of effort had passed, that the time had come to settle with Vincent for once and all, and to put an end to his bad behavior.

His mother and his cousin and his friend had failed to soften the stubborn heart or to change the determined will.

"So there's nothing left," said Eddie to the stalwart members of the Lookahead Club, "but to tell the priest, or to *lick* him in turn every time he's caught at his tricks. I'll begin, as the president."

It was agreed that a formal complaint to Father Fleming would be too hurtful, as the matter might become public; whereas, by forcing Vincent to fight a member each time he was caught working against the club, nothing would become known, and weariness or fear might force him to change. This decision came the night Mrs. Radley called her son to task, and Vincent was in high dudgeon when Eddie faced him in the common room just before bedtime.

"So, you telltale," said he sneeringly, "you went and told mother about your club, didn't you? You had to bring a woman into the matter, hadn't you? And I suppose the next thing will be to bring in the priest and the bishop and the Pope?"

"No," said Eddie, with a grave face, "we won't bring in any one but the heavyweights of the club. We've tracked you far enough, and we've talked enough, and we've borne enough, I guess. Now it's fight. The next time you are caught you must fight me; the second time you must fight No. 2; the third time you must fight No. 3."

"Who are No. 2 and No. 3?" asked Vincent.

"You will know when the time comes. Just get this into your head, if you can: you will fight every member in turn until the meanness is knocked out of you. We don't stand any more. You begin with me."

"I want to do that right away," said Vin, fiercely.

"It's all fixed. Don't worry. You are to be the

Wawayanda Saturday. Instead of roasting you when you're caught, I'll undertake to wallop you."

"And suppose I'm not caught?"

"You'll be caught," said Eddie, "and you'll get everything that is coming to you. And when the ten best men in the club have polished you off, you'll have more manners and a better spirit than you've shown in a long time."

Although he jeered in turn, Vincent went to bed with a heavy heart. He could not fight the ten best men in the club. It would be only an even matter with Eddie, who had great wind and fine pluck in a battle, to match his own greater reach and weight. Ten battles! Such a thing had never been heard of in Fallville. To fight all the members of a club, because he had exercised his rights as an American to break up their organization! Of course they had the same rights to break him up if they could, and so no fault could be found. He began to fear for himself; but he was no coward, and he would not complain; only he was determined to find a way out of it.

The boys assembled in Partridge's lot the next Saturday, with an interest greater than usual in the pursuit of Wawayanda. Ten hunters and trappers only were permitted to follow the trail; but the others were allowed to take up a station near the place of execution, as silent spectators of the scene. Eddie played the part of Red Mike. No one felt comfortable except the spectators. Wawayanda stood apart in frosty silence, and the hunters and trappers glared at him with feelings akin to the real thing. He had turned traitor and injured his brothers, and he was sorry for it now, because punishment was near and certain. He was savage with himself for being no match for Red Mike in running or hiding, and still less in a rough-and-tumble fight.

Eddie carried behind his fierce nose and whiskers a very sad but also a firm heart. He was determined to do his duty, to pound the son of his benefactor until he agreed to act rightly; but it hurt him very much, and he would have been happy to escape it.

No one cheered as the Indian, at the signal, trotted down the ravine which led to the bed of the river, and disappeared among the trees. He was allowed ten minutes' start, and he had to travel over a particular territory. Vincent almost sobbed as he noted the silence of the boys on his departure. He felt like some mean creature, running away from all good things, sure to be caught after a little while, sure to be beaten and humiliated, and then laughed at forever after. But he had to accept his fate, and he kept grimly on; wishing that he had acted differently, that he had not injured the Lookaheads, that he could find some way out of this long trouble, and that he could get in with the boys again. They hated him.

He made his run with a faint heart, but he made it; he climbed the precipice, and dodged through the underbrush, practising every trick known to Wawayanda; he beat his poor brains to discover a new one, which would confound his pursuers. But who could beat that terrible Eddie Travers in any one thing? Somehow he had better success than the last time; for the pursuers were longer than usual in locating his hiding-place. He doubled, took risks, did strange things, so that even Red Mike was puzzled. But he was finally captured, amid the cheers of the band, and taken to the place of execution. They went through the usual form, with a slight change.

"Wawayanda," said Red Mike, more solemnly than usual, "have you anything to say why sentence of death by fire shall not be passed upon you according to the customs of the nation?"

"I ask the favor of dying in a free fight with the leader of my enemies," replied the chief.

"Is it your pleasure that this request be granted?" said Red Mike.

The band shouted their consent. The principals stripped according to rule; a ring was formed on the green; and the members of the party sat in absolute silence on the rocks above, gleeful over the real punishment about to be administered to a real enemy. Wawayanda looked around and saw only one kindly face among the crowd. That was the face of Red Mike, stripped of nose and whiskers, determined, but full of pity. The heart of Vincent, which at bottom was a kind heart, turned into water at the signs of dislike everywhere. The word was given, and the two fighters began to circle around each other, looking for the best chance to grapple, when a loud exclamation from all interrupted them. Everyone was looking at a certain point beyond the circle, where amid the trees stood Father Fleming. He came forward.

"On the frontier," he said, "the priest has the privilege of saving a victim sentenced to the flames. I claim Wawayanda. I will guarantee his good behavior in the future. He is my friend. I baptized the poor savage. I trained him in the Faith. You must pardon him, and give him to me. All in favor will say 'Aye.'"

A ringing shout from the whole crowd greeted the request.

Did Father Fleming really understand? He must have understood, because he said to Wawayanda in a low voice:

"Follow me!"

And the two disappeared in the woods together, leaving a wondering crowd behind them.

CHAPTER VII

AN INVASION

AS soon as the priest was out of sight and hearing, there was a grand council of the boys, and the main question was: Who told Father Fleming? Some one must have betrayed the secret of the fight, and probably had also told of the resolution to keep fighting Vincent until he ceased his hostility to the club. Each one looked at his neighbor suspiciously, and the innocent ones cried out gaily:

"'Twasn't I!"

"It was his mother," Eddie informed the ten who had agreed to fight their common enemy. "I tried to get her interested, and she gave Vin a good scare, but nothing happened. Then, of course, she went to Father Fleming. He knows a month beforehand what people are going to do. So we may as well give up our plan. He will settle with Wawayanda, and I reckon we'll have no more trouble with him."

This surmise proved to be true. No one ever knew what occurred between the rescued lad and his rescuer. Mrs. Radley seemed more content from that time on, and Vincent behaved decently. He never spoke of the matter nor of the club; and he became more quiet in his manner, like one who has escaped a great danger and become more serious on that account. He was very glad to have gotten out of the trouble so well; but, in his rage at getting caught so nicely by the members of the club, he cherished a hatred against them, especially against Eddie Travers. He ignored them, and rarely spoke to Eddie except out of politeness.

So the happy old days in the Radley house ended for Eddie; he sat no more with his chums in the common room, chatting over everything. Harold now

talked of nothing but the bank and the clerks there, and he spent his leisure time in their company. He always referred to Vincent and Eddie as "you kids." He came home late in the evening, and had hard work getting up in the morning. Eddie felt very sad over the break in their friendship. He went to bed early and got up early, and once he heard Helen Sullivan say to Mrs. Radley:

"I'm glad to see that boy has been put in his place at last. You were spoiling him, but the boys have taught him where he belongs. If you would give him a room in the garret now, it would be just right for a chore boy."

"Your father was a chore boy," Mrs. Radley said sweetly; and Eddie had to run into the shed to laugh out loud at the expression on Miss Sullivan's pretty face.

"That *was* a slap!" said Eddie, who could not understand why the young lady had such a feeling against him. He was poor, not very smart, not handsome, and not in any one's way. Why should she dislike him? However, he thought well of the garret suggestion, and quietly put it in practice. It was a fine place, roomy and queer, full of old things which no one wanted. He made a study-nest for himself there, so as to keep out of Vincent's way; and, without saying a word about the change, fitted up a cot bed. He kept his room downstairs just the same, and Mrs. Radley made up to him by her increased kindness for the harshness of the others.

"You will save that poor boy yet," she said to Eddie. "The priest checked him and he takes it very hard; but he is doing better, and you must be patient with him."

"I don't mind," said Eddie; "and I'll be patient with him, too; and I'll do what I can to help him, as you helped me."

"Indeed you will," the poor mother replied, adding

to herself: "Oh, if my boy were like this dear orphan!"

The days wore on after that in their old fashion. The winter came, and the spring followed; and finally the warm weather and the bright sun called the boys to their summer pastimes. The Lookaheads had a lovely time cleaning up their beach and preparing it for the summer's bathing. It was all their own; and when a float had been placed in the pool, with a springboard, and something like a dressing-room built on the shore, where clothes could be hung, and the approaches to the place barred in various ways by Mr. McGinnis, its beauty surpassed description. Trespassers were warned to keep off the premises; but every boy in town resented the lease of the beach, and was determined to enjoy it. A few skirmishes proved, however, that the Sand Bar was at last private property, whose owners would not tolerate intrusion. Mr. McGinnis saw his garden grow to beauty without the loss of a single tomato; and chuckled as he sat in peace on his veranda, knowing how his fight was being fought in the streets of the town.

It was now early in the month of June, and the complaints of the defeated came in many forms to Vincent Radley, who saw nothing, but thought a great deal. He felt like getting even with the people whom he despised, but he had no desire to fight the whole club. To inflict some annoyance, to make Eddie Travers sit up and squirm a little, to break the monopoly of the beach for a day, to invade and cut up the garden of Mr. McGinnis, would have been joy to him. He began to plot what he called a joke on the boys,—nothing serious, just a joke, to show the saints of the town that monopoly is wrong and can always be easily broken. He would not for the world disturb or injure the Lookaheads,—oh, no! But it does people good to learn that they can not do as they please on this planet.

Eddie had never felt sure of Vincent's repentance, and had kept on his guard, and also on the watch for trouble. His plans defeated all the attacks of outsiders on the privacy of the beach and the integrity of the garden; and the opening skirmishes proved to the lawless that the Lookaheads could take care of their own. Eddie felt that here was a chance for Vincent to show his ill-will. He watched him and his chums carefully from the moment the swimming season began. The foot of the Falls was the preferable swimming place for the capable swimmers; but, after heavy rains up the State, this spot became a wild whirlpool, dangerous to all except the strongest. Then the boys turned to the Sand Bar, which became doubly pleasant because Mr. McGinnis objected. All were curious now to see how the place had been fitted up, and how the improvements added to its delights. A scheme to invade it for a day, to take possession and hold it in spite of the owners, to strip the garden quietly and listen to the epithets of McGinnis, proved popular, and Vincent planned and directed all. He was cautious and gave no signs. Eddie Travers looked as if nothing were going on; but he learned the whole plan a week before it was carried out, and had a long talk with Mister McGinnis.

School was coming to an end, examinations were on, and the boys had some extra leisure time. Vincent's plan was simple and pleasant. On a Saturday morning twenty-five of the stoutest boys stole along the river-bed above the Falls, and seized upon the beach. As a rule, the Lookaheads assembled about nine o'clock. The invaders took up a position at eight. No noise was made, for reasons. Mister McGinnis must not be disturbed. He also must be led to believe that the invaders were his own lessees. When the Lookaheads appeared, they were to be ducked and sent home along the river-bed, after a promise to keep quiet and give out

no information. The real trouble would come toward noon, after everyone knew what had happened.

The invaders enjoyed themselves immensely, swimming, diving from the springboard, which they tried to break by getting on it three at a time. It was eleven o'clock before Vincent noticed that not a Lookahead had appeared in the vicinity, and examination of the ground showed no signs of them. Toward the garden and the house, all was quiet and peaceful; and an old gardener digging away not ten feet off showed that no one suspected what had happened. But the leaders grew uneasy. It would be just like Eddie Travers to invent some scheme for their overthrow and humiliation.

"There's just one thing to do," said Vincent in alarm. "Dress and beat the woods all about here, or we'll be caught like rats in a trap."

Every boy made a rush for the shore, and for the clothes which he had hung on the pegs of the open-air dressing room. The clothes to the last stitch were gone! No one had seen them go. The old gardener declared that no one had been near him. There was not even a stray sock in the bushes. The twenty-four followers turned on their dismayed leader with angry inquiries. What were they to do? If he got up the scheme, why didn't he steer it properly? Recriminations and reproaches fell upon him like hail, but talk was foolish.

"We're beaten bad," said Vincent, "and we'll have to stay right here until the fellow that stole our clothes lets us go. If he tied us up or locked us up, we couldn't be worse off. So what's the use? Just keep quiet, and wait."

They waited till the sun began to turn toward the west, till their stomachs were empty, till their skins turned brown, till their tempers had curdled like sour milk, till the Sand Bar had become a place to hate.

And all the time not a soul appeared to whom they could appeal for help. The old gardener did not return after his dinner. The garden was wide open to their ravages; but, alas! a solitary policeman marched up and down in front of it, on the west side toward the road. Besides, there was nothing in it fit to eat so early in the season. Then the invaders began to quarrel. Some built a hut of branches and went to sleep in it. At three o'clock in the afternoon a boy came running along the dry river-bed from the direction of the Falls. Vincent sent out scouts to catch him at any hazard, but he turned out to be a messenger to them.

"All yer clothes," he piped breathless, "are down at the big rock under the Falls, and you'll have to go down there and get them."

"Maybe another trick," said Vincent. "Who told you?"

"Eddie Travers. And, besides, I saw the clothes,—lots of shirts and shoes and ties and collars,—and *lunches*."

"You had some of the lunches, I'll bet!" said Vincent.

And the boy grinned.

"No: Eddie wouldn't let any one have them. He said as how you fellows would eat the rocks if you didn't have something when you went looking for your clothes."

The twenty-five looked at one another sheepishly. But, giving them no time for discussion, Vincent led the way toward the river-bed. They went, in single file, down and across to the point where the water tumbled over into the swimming pool. There a natural stairway led down the rocky barrier to a big rock, where twenty-five sets of clothes lay neatly in order. The Lookaheads had vanished. In fact, their cheerful shouts could be heard already from the Sand Bar, and their laughter too.

What was worse, it being Saturday afternoon, half the lads of the town were gathered at the rock for a swim. Their plight was known to all, and such a "roasting" as they received, as they filed down the face of the cataract, and pounced upon their clothing and their lunches!

Here another laugh greeted them. The weighty lunch packages held nothing but sand and stones!

"To the victors belong the spoils!" said Vincent, as the disgusted jokers now fled for home and dinner.

It would be long before the Sand Bar would again suffer invasion.

CHAPTER VIII

GETTING WORK

THE ridicule which Vincent suffered for a week or two from the other boys made him bitter against the Lookaheads and their cunning chief. He could hardly bear to look at Eddie, who had beaten him at every point and made him a laughing-stock. He would have complained to his mother and have the boy driven from the house, but it was against the law to complain; and, moreover, his mother would have heard the whole story, and would have taken Eddie's side. So he made his complaint to Harold, who undertook to rebuke Eddie in his friend's name; but Eddie took the position that Vincent should make his own complaints.

"Let him say what he has to say before me, and I think I can answer him."

Vincent accepted the challenge.

"I can't object to what was done," said he; "but I can object to the way you did it."

"And I can object to what you did and the way you did it," replied Eddie with indignation. "You got out

of one scrape, because we wouldn't interfere with Father Fleming's plans. You might have been decent enough to leave us alone, but you weren't. You tried to steal our holiday, and then to destroy our spring-board and our float. You got off cheap."

"I'd rather take a *basting* than the laugh we got from the boys. You never fight fair. It's always the trick, the underhand way."

"Well, we borrowed that from you when you were stealing our members," said Eddie. And the talk ended with more bitterness than before.

Harold took Vincent's side, in spite of the facts; and both boys ignored Eddie more than ever. They were glad to see that he had taken the garret for his quarters, and that he could be out of their sight most of the time.

School was coming to an end, and the great event was about to happen at last: Vincent was going to work. He talked of nothing else, and he talked everywhere. He suggested that Harold use his great influence at the bank to get him in there, and Harold promised to do his best.

"But there isn't the slightest chance," said he; "for no one is leaving, and I know two who are on the waiting list."

"It's a very particular place, besides," his sister said; "and one has to be well qualified for such a position."

Vincent looked at her with disdain; and he wanted to say something sharp, but his mother changed the conversation. Eddie might have snickered, only that he felt too deeply the slight put upon Vincent. He knew more about the opinions of Helen and her brother than they suspected, for she had warned Harold that he must not lift a finger to get Vincent into the bank; and the lad himself had no desire to share his honors with his cousin. He was willing to help him to get a place elsewhere, but he wanted no rivals in the bank.

Now that Vincent had to find a position, and a much better one than Harold's, he became dubious and hesitating. He would not go to work until September, because he must have the long vacation. In looking around for a fine, elegant, high-salaried place, he was astonished to see that none surpassed the bank in the esteem of mankind; and in his distress at this painful discovery — that he would be forced to take a lower place than Harold's — he ventured to consult with Eddie Travers, who was more than happy at that display of confidence.

"There's one place will be vacant before the summer is over," said Eddie, "and it would suit you all right. Mr. Willard's secretary is going West to a bigger job."

"The very thing!" said Vincent. "I'll apply in person."

"Don't you do it," Eddie advised. "There'll be twenty looking for it, and only the man who has strong recommendations will get it. Go to Father Fleming and ask him to help you."

"Since I left the club," said Vincent, "I can do my own asking."

"But you can't do your own getting," said Eddie, "and you needn't be too 'chesty' when you are looking for a job."

Life all at once began to look rosy to Vincent, as secretary to the great and wealthy Mr. Willard. Of course he had already secured the place in his mind, and saw himself riding about in the Willard coaches, giving orders in Willard's name, dining at Willard's table, and always dressed like a lord. He put on his finest clothes and went to see the great man many times, but neither at his home nor his office could he get beyond the butler or the office-boy. "Have you an appointment?" they always said.

He began to think of Father Fleming, to whom Eddie had already spoken in his behalf; and he remembered that in all his troubles the priest had been very kind and gentle, rarely reminding him of his faults of behavior. He also reflected that one must not be too stiff in asking favors, and that help is welcome no matter whence it comes. So he went to Father Fleming humbly, and stated his need.

"You should have come before," said the priest. "Eddie Travers told me you were looking for a place, and that place in particular. But you have lost time, sir; and in business one must not lose time. Now here's the letter of introduction to Mr. Willard. Present it, and let him name the date for seeing you. Be modest and candid with him. I think you'll satisfy him."

Vincent was astonished to see how far that letter carried him — past all guards, right into the presence of the great man, who questioned him gently, spoke in praise of Father Fleming, and engaged him on the priest's recommendation alone. He would receive instructions from the head clerk in the office, and should be prepared to take up his duties about the middle of September.

What good fortune! When he told it at supper, Helen Sullivan went speechless, Harold showed at first some jealousy, Eddie beamed with joy, and Mrs. Radley became weak with astonishment. Then they all began to talk at once over the wonderful event, and Vincent grew so elated at his luck that he forgot the share which Eddie had in it.

"Well, now, with a secretary and a banker in the family, we ought to be happy," said Mrs. Radley. "I'm so proud that I'm afraid I'll show it on the street. And what are you going to be, Eddie, to complete our glory?"

The good, kindly woman never left him out of anything.

"Oh, I'm not so swell as some others!" said Eddie. "I've got a nice job in Hurley's grocery at five dollars a week."

"Quite suitable!" said the frosty Miss Sullivan.

"Will Father Fleming let his club president begin as low down as that?" asked Harold.

"I got the job myself," said Eddie, "and he gave me a recommendation. I must begin at the foot of the ladder and work up, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," Harold replied; "but if I were a great man like him, and had a chance to help the man who helped me, I think I'd put him higher."

"You think you would!" Eddie repeated with disdain. "Well, why didn't you give Vincent a lift in the bank? A new fellow went in there yesterday."

"Well, of all the impudence!" exclaimed Miss Sullivan.

Mrs. Radley changed the conversation again, to their happiness, and averted the quarrel which might have resulted; for Harold got red, and Vincent got pale, and Eddie's eyes flashed fire at the hypocrisy of some people. They forgot to ridicule his grocery job, and also to ask further questions about it. He went to work as soon as school closed. His employer was a kind man,—rather slow in his ways, and the store seemed just like him. Eddie found it the loveliest spot he had ever known; something like a great book, for everything had a history; and Mr. Hurley could talk like a book in telling where his goods came from, and how they came, and how they had changed within the past twenty years. It was like studying geography and science, with stories thrown in.

Eddie had to wait on customers, but mostly to carry goods about the town. He carried a basket one hour, and wheeled a wagon another hour. Often the secre-

tary of Mr. Willard rolled by in the coach and just nodded to him; often he passed the bank, from whose windows Harold winked at him in good-natured contempt; and he laughed when he remembered Miss Sullivan's acid remark: "Quite suitable!"

"The foot of the ladder is the same everywhere," said thoughtful Eddie.

CHAPTER IX

AN ADVENTURE

"**I** THINK people forget very easily," Eddie said one day to Father Fleming, when they were discussing the affairs of the club.

The priest smiled; for he was always amused at Eddie's progress in the ways of the world. The boy had a habit of summing up many experiences, of which he rarely spoke, in sentences which might have come from a village sage.

"I never knew that until I was thirty," answered the priest; "but, then, of course I never had the luck of working in a grocery."

Eddie gave him a sharp look; for one could never tell when he was joking.

"Oh, I mean what I say!" he went on. "In a grocery, where you meet little people looking for little things, you see human nature as if among children. It is open and transparent. So you have learned at fifteen what I learned at thirty: that people easily forget. In particular they forget benefits."

"We used to have such good times in the sitting-room at home," said Eddie—"Harold, Vincent and I,—after school, or at night after study. Now we never see one another except on the fly."

"And Vincent has forgotten that you got him his

place, and both have forgotten their old affection," replied the priest. "That's the world, my boy. You will meet that every minute of every day; and you must not let it change your ways or limit your kindness. Vincent is happy in his fine position, and you have more than paid back what you owed his mother. Always do good, whether you get thanked or not."

"Of course," said Eddie. "It isn't that, you know. But one hates to see the good old times fade away."

Father Fleming comforted him with many words and fine examples. He had seen even more than Eddie saw of the changes in the boys. The bank position had lifted Harold far above old associations, and had filled him with a fine conceit. The office of secretary to Mr. Willard had actually turned Vincent's light head. Although he had to work hard and steady, and the discipline proved rather severe, his fine dress and his fine associations made up to him for his hardships. He felt like a lord riding around in a coach; and he looked down upon his old companions, wondering how he ever could have found them agreeable. When he saw Eddie trudging about the town in seedy clothes, with a basket of goods on his arm, or shoving the wagon ahead of him, he wondered if *he* could ever stoop to that. Eddie watched him with delight; for in his fine clothes, with his height, his fair skin, blue eyes and yellow hair, Vincent looked as distinguished as a prince, and acted like one, in his cold, grand way, with the old boys. He never could see them on state occasions. But he made up for this reserve on holidays, when he condescended to join them on excursions to the woods, or to the bathing place at the foot of the Falls.

Eddie invited both Harold and Vincent to the Sand Bar on July Fourth as guests of the Lookahead Club, and both declined politely. They answered:

"The Falls is good enough for us."

"A bad place to-day," observed Eddie. "Rain up

State, and the stopping of the mills has flooded the river, and you'll have to do some wild swimming to keep afloat."

"That's what we want," said Vincent.

"The Sand Bar is a dream," Eddie continued; for he wanted their companionship, and he also feared for them, as they were not good swimmers.

"Run along, Eddie Lookahead,—run along, little boy! We associate only with men nowadays," they said jeeringly.

Eddie felt so anxious about them that in the afternoon he followed them to the foot of the Falls. The rocky bed above the Falls was now one mass of rushing water, frothing, roaring, until with a deep, booming sound it fell into the basin at the foot of the Falls. To get to the big rock near the center of the river the boys had to walk along the bank, and pick a path through the shallows, by jumping from stone to stone, until they arrived opposite the pool. At this point the water tumbled in immense volume over the precipice, was broken by the rocks into many foaming torrents, and was swept away into the narrow channel which its own force had cut through the bed of the river. The feat which every dashing swimmer had to perform on days like this was to get under the Falls by making a circuit, sport behind the curtain of water for a while, then make a rush into the wild current outside, and at full speed dash up to the landing-place. It was not difficult, but it required nerve. Eddie had done it many times, and thought nothing of it. Harold had done it a few times, but was not in love with it. Vincent had a habit of losing his nerve at the wrong moment; although he, too, had done the deed many times.

Eddie watched them from the high bank, himself unseen. When they had begun the circuit of the basin, he slipped down the steep path and made his

way to the big rock. There were twenty swimmers disporting in the wild water, but most of them preferred to keep away from the foot of the Falls that afternoon. Harold and Vincent made the circuit easily, dived under the falling water, and were not seen for some time. No one paid any attention to their absence, except for an occasional glance at the spot where their heads would appear in the wild current surging from the place where the falling waters struck the basin. All the ordinary footholds had been submerged; and once a swimmer got under the Falls, there was nothing to do but come down with the wild current, and take the chance of making the shore somewhere.

All at once a curious sight was seen. Vincent and Harold made their appearance by the very way in which they went in, and tried to get back by the easy way, instead of diving boldly into the main stream. Harold waved his hands at the crowd to signify they needed help; and he seemed to be encouraging Vincent, whose face showed very pale in the rough water. They got on the ledge of the Falls, where they could stand in water to their chin, but could with great difficulty keep their footing in the boiling flood. Harold had secured a hold with his right hand on a ledge, and was sustaining Vincent with the other. He was calling for help, but the roar of the water drowned his voice.

The boys on the rock knew at the first glance what had happened: Vincent had lost his nerve and become exhausted between fright and struggle. Eddie was out of his clothes in half a minute. He took a survey of the crowd. The best swimmers were absent, for the holiday had taken them out of town. He picked out two and ordered them to follow him. The rest were to be ready to pull the exhausted boy from the water. The three plunged in and made the long circuit of the basin, which required some effort in

the surging water. In a few minutes they were standing on the ledge about Vincent.

"What's the matter?" Eddie shouted. "Is he hurt?"

"No, only played out," Harold yelled back. "He thinks he can't swim from here to the rock, and he's getting worse every minute."

"Now you fellows save yourselves,—I'm gone!" Vincent managed to say.

A wan smile showed on his terribly pale, frightened face. His eyes seemed sunk in his head, and were fixed and staring. Harold was not much better off, and their fear communicated itself to the two companions of Eddie, who began to pale and shiver. The five boys were standing on tiptoe on the rock bottom; but the whirling water kept pushing them off, and they had to swim and labor for a foothold. It was a terrible scene,—the foaming waters tumbling overhead, the wild current sweeping downward into the channel, and the roar of the waters drowning everything.

Eddie's stout heart did not quail; for he knew just what to do and how to do it. All the boys in the water could take care of themselves, but they would be of little use in helping Vincent, who had begun to collapse even then. Eddie struck him in the face with his open hand, and the shock roused him.

"You've got to swim across the basin, Vin!" he screamed. "Two will go ahead, and Harold and I will hold you up on each side. All together now, rush it!"

Very willingly the leaders dashed into the basin; and, without giving Vincent time to think, Harold and Eddie seized his arms and dragged him along with them. In a sleepy way, the drowning boy struck out; but his strokes had no force and no direction in them. They helped to keep him afloat, and Eddie dragged him along through the boiling water quite

easily. He gave him a punch now and then to rouse him, and slapped his back another time. Harold's strength and nerve gave out when they were half across, and Eddie had to "jolly" him a little to keep him to his work.

"One more pull,—all together!" Eddie sang out; and, with cheers from the boys on shore, Vincent was lifted out of the river and laid on the safe and solid rock. Then a voice of alarm rang out:

"Where's Harold?"

In the joy of getting Vincent safely landed, no one noticed Harold's feeble efforts to climb out of the water. His senses left him as he was gripping the rock, and he slipped back into the stream. He came up once, a few feet away, just as Eddie heard the loud cry of alarm; then sank again. But Eddie had him by the hair while one could count three, and was leading him up on the rock in half a minute. In his joy at saving them, and his irritation against them, he said rather sharply:

"The next time you get an invitation to the Sand Bar you'll take it. I'll see that you take it, I guess."

But the rescued boys heard nothing and cared nothing. Spirit and body alike were exhausted by fright and struggle, and they just lay there helpless, ministered to kindly by their comrades for an hour. Toward evening they were restored enough to get home without attracting notice. Eddie warned them not to mention the peril of the day to mother and sister, because the fright would bring on, at home, an attack of emotion to which there would be no end. And all agreed to keep silent. It was like old times to Eddie when they walked home together, and the two boys pressed his hands affectionately, looked at him with kind, fervent eyes, and said:

"Eddie Lookahead, you're a brick!"

CHAPTER X

MORE TROUBLE

FATHER FLEMING kept a close but easy watch on all his boys, and informed himself regularly how they were getting on. Some had to be helped every week, or admonished, or made to do penance. He had a different way with each, according to his nature. He never gave advice to Vincent, because that young man felt resentful to advisers. As his comrades said of him, he thought he "knew it all." So when Father Fleming met him he would say:

"Well, how are things going, Vincent?"

"Fine, and I think I'll get a raise in salary soon, Father."

"You look as if you deserved it, my boy. But just a whisper in your ear. Old Mr. Chester has asked for your place, or the next to it, for his son. Keep your eyes open, and do your best this month."

Vincent never knew how much he loved his place, how badly he would feel to lose it, until he saw the Chesters visiting Mr. Willard frequently. That sight did him more good than advice for a time. On the other hand, Harold took advice as if it were a dinner, discussed it all, and seemed to be deeply interested and impressed. But he never followed it, because he forgot it the next minute.

So Father Fleming gave no advice to Harold, only little remarks like this:

"You won't get your advance in salary this quarter, my boy, because your 'boss,' as you call him, is tired of late arrivals in the morning, and little tricks to escape the consequences. You watch the clock too closely at the wrong time."

And Harold would blush, denounce himself fiercely, and promise to reform. But he forgot reform also.

Now, with Eddie Travers Father Fleming acted differently. The boy seemed to be born prudent. He had a serious mind and an observing disposition. He reflected a long time on what he saw in life and in himself, and he saw so much that he worried over many things. He could take all the advice Father Fleming had in stock, and use it, too; and they often sat together, debating the next move in the direction of the Lookaheads, or in the management of Vincent and Harold. Matters at home had become pleasant again. Eddie stuck to his garret, but the three boys met oftener in the common room, and the two had changed their attitude toward Eddie. They looked up to him now, instead of looking down on him. But there were clouds in the sky, and Eddie saw them gathering all summer about the heads of his two friends. He warned and advised them.

"These banks," he said to Harold, "are very particular about their clerks and about their rules and regulations. You can't expect that they will let you keep on coming five minutes late to-day and ten minutes late tomorrow. Why, in the grocery I have to be ahead of time. Hurley wouldn't stand being late twice."

"Worrying again!" Harold said lightly. "Well, as some one must worry, I'm willing that you shall do it."

"If you lose the bank job, you'll do enough worrying for ten," said Eddie.

And Harold knew that he was right. His place there was the breath of his body; to lose it would be something like drowning; yet, in spite of the facts, he could not bring himself to be punctual, to do the right thing always. He had a feeling that he could never lose the position until he left it of his own

accord for something better. Vincent was even worse. His self-confidence had no limit. Some one had told him that a notable citizen of the town had said one day:

"Mr. Willard, you have a fine-looking young secretary."

"Just as fine as he looks," the great man replied.

From that moment Vincent paid great attention to his personal beauty, his dress, and his manners; and, by long study of himself, and comparison with other fellows, he discovered his own superiority to the rest of Fallville. He patted Eddie on the back when the boy warned him of coming danger to his prospects.

"Now, Eddie," said he loftily, "you mustn't imitate Father Fleming too closely. He warned me, too. He warned Harold. But we aren't likely to lose these jobs any more than you can lose the grocery."

"If Mr. Willard sees you coming out of Howell's poolroom just once, you won't stay another day in his office."

"Why, that was only an accidental visit," said Vincent, blushing. "It's a respectable place, too."

"If he sees you walking around with Bill Somers twice, you'll be 'fired' on the spot. I can't see what you and Harold are thinking of. You're making too free with your luck, and it will leave you."

"And you're making too free with our affairs," replied Vincent, harshly. But the next minute he added: "Forget that, Eddie. I didn't mean it. I'd have no affairs except a grave just now, if you hadn't interfered. But don't worry. I'll keep out of trouble, and I'll also keep my job."

So Eddie and Father Fleming had to be content, and to watch the coming disaster with sad hearts.

"These things have to be," said the priest, "just because men will learn in no other way. The school

of experience is very bitter and expensive, but it is necessary to many, and its teachings are usually heeded."

Vincent Radley could hardly appreciate the power of that remark the day he read the polite letter which dispensed with his services in Mr. Willard's office and household. He was amazed and horrified. What Father Fleming had hinted at, what Eddie had foretold, had come to pass. His nerve failed him: he sat down and wept. In an hour he looked like a sick young man, as pale and sunken as Eddie had seen him at the foot of the Falls. Everyone would know it; he would have to walk the streets looking for any sort of a job, or return to school again, as his mother wished. He set his teeth. He would not walk the streets to be laughed at; he would not return to school. He would go away to another town, and hide his shame and mortification there. He had to act quickly; so he announced a week's vacation to his mother, and rushed away to some relatives in the country, where he would have the time to think over plans for the future. But he had no head for plans; and he wrote to Harold, telling him the sad news, and asking for that advice which he always rejected.

His sorrowful letter found Harold in the same trouble. The head of the bank had just informed him that his services would be no longer required, because he had failed to give satisfaction; and he wished him every success in his future career. Harold laughed in the bitterness of his heart at that phrase. His "future career"! He had destroyed it. However, he could do what Vincent had done — take a vacation and think the matter over. Oh, how the fellows would laugh when the news of their fall went round, and other young fellows sat in their places in the bank and the office! Harold packed his satchel, and joined his companion in misfortune in the country. The news

was all over town in an hour. The envious laughed at Mrs. Radley and Miss Sullivan, because their pride would now suffer a terrible fall; but the women did not know of it until Father Fleming brought them the word.

"Well, Vincent can go to school again," Mrs. Radley said cheerfully. "He's too proud to work at anything lower, and so he must go to school."

"Both out of their positions!" Helen Sullivan almost screamed at the priest. "Impossible! It must have been a conspiracy."

"It was, on their part," said Father Fleming. "They conspired to break all the rules of their offices. I warned them a few times, Eddie warned them often; but they felt quite sure of themselves."

"Eddie warned them!" exclaimed Miss Sullivan, bitterly. "It's a wonder he didn't get their places. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he's at the bottom of it all."

"No: they have only themselves to blame," said the priest. "And you, Miss Sullivan, have no right to speak of Eddie Travers in that way, after the very great service he rendered you and your brother last summer."

"I am not aware of any service," she said stiffly.

"You ought to be; and perhaps, if you took a little more notice of the general behavior and habit of your brother, you might be."

Thereupon he informed both women of the rescue of the two boys from a watery grave. Mrs. Radley wept happy tears, but Miss Sullivan was rather sullen.

"I shall be glad to help the boys in any way," said Father Fleming, in leaving. "And they will need help; for they have lost two fine places, and will be very much cast down. Where are they?"

"Both in the country, hiding their mortification," Mrs. Radley said, smiling. "They must feel very

badly; but it will do them good: it will teach them next time to appreciate good positions."

"Well, when they get back tell them I may be able to do something for them," said Father Fleming.

As he rose to go out, the door bell rang sharply, and Miss Sullivan admitted a gentleman who seemed to be somewhat disturbed. Both women exclaimed at sight of him; and, without greeting, he asked at once:

"Are the boys here with you?"

"No: they are with you," replied Mrs. Radley, growing white and faint.

"They have run away, then," said the gentleman; "for they left my place two days ago, without any notice. I heard them talking of some trouble here at home, and of getting away West to make their fortunes; but I paid no attention to it, until they went off and did not come back. So I came down to see."

"I don't believe my brother would do such a thing," Miss Sullivan said in her proud way; "nor Vincent either."

"Well, I've told you," answered the gentleman. "They left like tramps, without a word to us; and they're not here where they ought to be. You have the responsibility now."

The two women came to the same thought, when they were able to talk the matter over with the priest and the visitor. Grief settled down on the house that night. Eddie was frightened at the story told him, and the pitiable condition of the mother and the sister. Miss Sullivan was prostrated utterly. They saw in their imagination the two boys wandering about like tramps, herding with them, exposed to wild weather, travelling in freight cars, in danger all the time. They could not rest or eat or sleep.

"You saved them once," Harold's sister said, weeping; "will you not save them again? Leave your work

and go look for them. They will come to you when they would not to others."

"I'll do anything to bring them back," said Eddie. "But I don't think there's any need to fret about them. They know how to take care of themselves. They have some money. They're ashamed now; but when they get work somewhere, they will write and let us know where they are."

He described a boy's way of getting along in traveling with such knowledge and certainty that the poor women found comfort in his words, and began to hope again. But Mrs. Radley took up her niece's suggestion to send Eddie in pursuit of those foolish boys. His instinct would beat a detective's, and he would find them and save them. She resolved to discuss the project with Father Fleming the next day. Between praying, weeping, dreaming of the runaways, the two passed a miserable night. Eddie's summing up of the trouble was:

"Fool at the beginning, fool at the end."

CHAPTER XI

EDDIE'S MISSION

MISS SULLIVAN hastened to make her suggestion to Father Fleming, that Eddie be sent out at once to hunt for the runaways. The suffering of one night had opened her eyes to many things. Who would have thought that Harold, so polite and thoughtful, so devoted to her, could run away from home like a common boy, and inflict on her so much dread and pain? It was sad enough to lose his place in the bank, but that could be made up for somehow. To deepen the disgrace by becoming a tramp only made matters worse. She did not be-

lieve a human being could suffer what she had suffered one night and live afterward. But she lived, and suffered still. And in that anguish she saw for the first time the real character of Eddie Travers and the actual meanness of her feelings toward him. From him, the stranger, she had really received more attention and respect than from the brother upon whom she had lavished her admiration, affection, praise, time, and money. She was now hoping through the despised pauper to rescue her brother, and she said as much to Father Fleming.

"Yes, Eddie is a sensible, good-hearted boy," said the priest. "He is more like a man in his ways than a boy. Misfortune, of course, deepens a nature like his; and he has had his share. I think your idea of sending him out to find the boys is a very good one. But I shall first call on Mr. McGinnis, who used to be a detective, and hear his opinion. I think he will be able to locate the foolish fellows in a very short time. It will be another matter whether they will like to return here, where everyone knows their humiliation."

"Don't you think," said Miss Sullivan, "that, after the hardships and dangers of tramping like the common hobo, they will be glad to get back to decent comfort, to their own homes?"

"That depends," said the priest, and every word struck the heart and the mind of the girl. "If they have good luck in their journey, and some fun, they will keep going, and there is not enough attraction in Fallville to bring them back. Neither you nor Mrs. Radley ever brought up the boys to appreciate what you gave them. They were permitted to have their own way in everything. And when you opposed them, they opposed you. They are indulging their own way now. If you oppose them, you will be looked on as their enemies."

Miss Sullivan wept bitterly; and Father Fleming, while he pitied her, felt that she needed the grief which oppressed her. He had often warned her that grief through her brother would one day be her portion, but she had not heeded his warnings. She went home comforted with his assurance that Eddie Travers would accompany the detective in the search for the boys.

A telephone call to Hurley's store and another to the house by the Sand Bar brought Mr. McGinnis and Eddie to the priest's house about the same moment. The owner of the famous garden had never impressed Eddie as a man of power, like Father Fleming or Mr. Hurley or the cashier of the bank. Mr. McGinnis was fat and red and fussy, and always laughing or arguing at the top of his voice. After the agreement about the Sand Bar, he had treated the boys well, had never interfered with their fun, had piled his fruit and vegetables before them, had helped them to improve their little beach. These favors had won general regard; and the respect which Father Fleming showed to him assured Eddie that the gardener was a worthy man. Still, the lad rated him among the very ordinary, and could not keep from smiling at his restless ways.

Father Fleming explained the incident of the day previous.

"Now I want you to take up the case, George," said he, "and find those boys as soon as possible. Miss Sullivan makes this suggestion: that you take Eddie Travers along with you, because they may reveal themselves to him when they would not to you."

"They can't help but reveal themselves," said Mr. McGinnis, with a grin. "I'll find them inside of a week, if they're hid in a crack of the mountains. I don't see any use for the boy here, unless he wants a trip through the country. I'll just locate the two

scamps, have them arrested and sent home like any other tramps, which they deserve after leaving two decent women like that."

"They deserve it, of course," said the priest; "but, above all, the ladies want no publicity. So arrest and sending home in charge of the police must be left out. That's why I wish you to take Eddie along. When you locate the lads, he may be able to persuade them to do things properly."

"I see,—I see! And I think Eddie Travers is just the boy to persuade the scamps into the right path," replied Mr. McGinnis, with a favorable eye for Eddie, who was rolling in delight at the thought of such a journey.

"Do you think they can be easily found?" asked Father Fleming.

"Give me six days at the outside to locate them."

"Why are you so confident?"

"Well, it's this way," answered Mr. McGinnis. "They were on a farm near Saratoga, you tell me; and both were feeling pretty sore over losing their places, and they had made up their mind not to come back here to be laughed at; and they had very little money, and the only places a boy without money can go to, from Saratoga, are New York and Buffalo on the way to the great West, where Horace Greeley advised all young men to go. Well, they went to New York or to Buffalo, and we can find that out in Saratoga. They go as far as money takes them, and then they take to freight cars, and then to the road, or they work on a farm here and there to pay their way. Oh, it would take me a long time to tell you all the reasons why a week will find them, and perhaps a day, if they're as simple as I take them to be!"

"Oh, if Harold and Vincent heard that from Mr. McGinnis!" Eddie thought, looking all the while at

the jovial man, who did not seem to know much and yet had the esteem of Father Fleming in a high degree.

"Will you be ready to start at once?" said he to Eddie. "We can be in Saratoga at three o'clock, and we ought to know before bedtime what direction the two scamps took."

"I arranged with Mr. Hurley to let you off for a month, if necessary," said the priest to Eddie.

"Then I'll meet you at the station for the 1.30 for Saratoga," replied Eddie.

"Now, my son," said Father Fleming, when Mr. McGinnis had departed with many assurances that the boys would be home in no time, "you can see what our detective thinks about the runaways."

"Is Mr. McGinnis a detective?" asked Eddie, with his eyes as round as the moon, and as bright as stars, so that the priest laughed.

"You don't think it," he replied, "because he looks more like a gardener. But that is his business. He's not in it so much as before he settled down to a home and a garden, but he is still employed on important and dangerous missions. Now you never dreamed that this jolly man can shoot like an Indian, face a den of thieves without trembling, and do things which would make most men shiver."

"I would sooner take *you* for a detective," said Eddie frankly.

"You must look closer and deeper, Edward. Go up now and comfort the two women with what McGinnis says about the boys. All I want you to do when they are found is to persuade them to return. You will have a fine holiday with the detective. Get him to tell you something about detective life."

Eddie went off like a bird to prepare for his journey, the first serious one he had ever undertaken. And what a pleasant, interesting journey, in company with

a famous detective, who looked like a jolly farmer and as innocent as a cow! Nature had certainly disguised him for his profession. Eddie resolved to get all the stories he could from him. He had liked him before for his kindness, but now he respected him deeply.

With what joy the sorrowing mother and sister helped Eddie to pack a few things in a small satchel! And how they smiled at his report of the astonishing Mr. McGinnis!

"Oh, how true what you said that I would one day have to eat my words about this boy!" Miss Sullivan remarked to Mrs. Radley, as they stood looking at him marching proudly down the street to join the detective.

"I'll bring them back," was Eddie's last word.

Never before did he have such a feeling of exultation; and it increased with each incident of the journey, — when the detective bought the tickets for Saratoga, when officials of the railroad shook hands with him respectfully, when distinguished-looking men, in passing, greeted him like an equal. And Eddie felt proud when one man said, with a pleasant look at himself:

"Your boy, George?"

"I wish he was!" answered the detective. "He's worth more than I could leave him."

Praise from Mr. George McGinnis was really worth while.

CHAPTER XII

TAKING TO THE ROAD

MEANWHILE what had happened to the two boys? When Harold first made his unexpected appearance in the little village where Vincent was in hiding from disgrace with their relatives, his cousin greeted him with a scowl.

"What brought you here?" he said.

"The same trouble as your own, my boy. I've lost my job."

Vincent felt like laughing at first, because misery loves company; but at the second thought, the double disgrace for the family at home, he grew wretched.

"What happened to you? Why should you lose such a place? I thought it was tied to you. What did you do?"

"What did *you* do?" Harold snapped back.

"Nothing. The other man wanted my place, and he had the pull."

"Same here. Another man wanted the place, and he got it."

Then they proceeded to compare notes,—to recall the supposed schemes of their rivals, and to lay the blame on them. Neither remembered how often he had been warned by friends and superiors of his arriving late at the office, and of other delinquencies. They satisfied each other that the sole reason for the loss of two fine positions was the plotting of other boys to oust them.

And then they took up the question of what to do next. It was agreed that they could not go back to Fallville and face the gibes of the boys, that they could not take inferior places, that they could not return to school. They must work for a living; and the only thing to do was to travel to some town where work was plentiful, and where employers would appreciate good men when they had them.

"I vote for New York," said Vincent. "It's a big city, and there must be a lot of work there for any one. Then it is so big a town that no one will notice just what you are doing. We can take any kind of a job, live anywhere,—pick up a living selling newspapers at the worst, and look out for good chances."

It's a fine place to be, with lots of queer sights and lots of fun."

They discussed that point for a few days, and the lure of the great city almost won them, until Harold thought of a serious objection.

"How much money have you?" said he.

"One dollar, and two coming from home."

"I have ten, which will make thirteen. We can sneak down the river for five, I think; and then we have eight to live on for a week. But in New York I know that prices are high, and for two fellows eight dollars will not last long. If we should not strike work, and had to meet bad luck for a while, what then?"

"But we shall not have to wait for work," said Vincent. "Work is as common as blackberries down here."

"But suppose we met bad luck?" Harold persisted.

"Bad luck is bad luck, of course," Vincent admitted.

"Now, I have been thinking what 'hayseeds' we should be in New York if our money gave out. The police would have us in no time, and we should be marched back to Fallville right away. That happened to Dicky Jones, you know. Wouldn't we look swell, the ex-secretary and the ex-banker, getting off a train with a detective!"

"I never thought of the police," said Vincent, weakly.

"Your mother will be telegraphing everywhere for you, and my sister for me," Harold continued. "We must keep away from cities. Why not get as far as we can from this country? If we keep to the railroad and try to get to Buffalo, we can steal a ride on a freight car, find a job on a farm when our money

gives out, or drive horses on the canal. And all the time we can hide from the police."

They discussed that plan for a few days, and finally decided on a trip to the far West, and a job as cowboys on a ranch. After a while the scheme began to look very easy. They knew boys who had gone to Colorado and back on freight trains. Instead of paying out money for fare, they could keep it for food. The more they talked, the more they saw that mother and sister would use the police everywhere to catch them. It never seemed to occur to them that the women would be in a state of fright and grief over their disappearance. They never once thought of the money which their relatives would spend in the effort to find them. They were fairly good boys, had been brought up well, had learned obedience and respect for their parents, had frequented the Sacraments; but they had never learned really to love and understand the kind mother, the loving sister, who were "all right" while they petted them and supplied them with clothes and money; but the moment they began to object to their behavior, then they became as enemies.

The real reason why the boys could not understand grief and terror at home was because they had no real affection for any one but themselves. They were just as happy at that moment, in the thought of a wild flight to the West, and life on a ranch, as if a fortune had come to them; and they thought mother and sister ought to be happy too. They did not even take into consideration the relatives with whom they were living just then. It was their plan to leave the farmhouse for a little trip to Saratoga, and not to return, or to leave a note of explanation. It would have been easy to leave politely; but they had laid aside politeness, obedience, respect for their relatives and respect for themselves. They were going to run away from home, to pick up a fortune in the far West, and then

come back some day and let people see what clever boys can do when they get a chance. They dreamed at night of gold mines, and of riding around Fallville in golden carriages, with all the boys staring at them, and the bankers asking who they were.

One night they carried their satchels out of the house and hid them in the bushes a mile down the road. The next morning after breakfast they said good-bye to their cousins, and set out on foot for the town only a few miles away. Their first disappointment struck them when they sought for their satchels. There was no trace of them in the bushes. First they thought it a friendly trick on the part of their relatives; then it seemed they had made a mistake in the hiding-place; but all doubt was ended when they found a note hanging on the bushes tied by a string. A waggish tramp had written in it these words: "When you go tramping take no extra clothes or satchels. I am just finishing a long tramp, so I take yours. The farther West you go, the less clothes you'll need."

"He heard us talking last night," said Harold, sheepishly; "and he must have been sleeping in these bushes. We *are* 'hayseeds,' and I'm glad we are not going to New York."

Vincent was so enraged that he could not speak a word. He just reflected that they were on the down road, and that every move helped them downward the more. But now that the start had been made, he would not turn back if everything on earth were to set out in the opposite direction.

"Forward!" said he. "We won't be 'hayseeds' long, at this rate of speed."

In an hour they had reached the town; before night they had a snug place in a freight car bound for Buffalo; by morning they had arrived on the outskirts of a little town, and a friendly train hand informed them that the inspectors were about, making it necessary for

them to depart, and to catch up with the same train a few hours later on the other side of the town.

CHAPTER XIII

EARNING A LIVING

THE fresh air of the cool summer morning, the sight of the green fields shining with dew, and the sweet quiet everywhere, raised the spirits of the boys, after a night of uproar and unrest in an empty freight car. Grimy with dust, cramped and sore from the rough ride, their clothes wrinkled and dirty, their hair standing at all angles, the two lads stretched themselves, looked at each other and grinned. They could not help recalling the pleasant rooms at home, the soft beds, the ready bath, and all the little comforts which they had thrown away.

Vincent had a rude candor which expressed his feelings and opinions promptly.

"Well, Harold," said he, "this is not the Kenmore nor yet the Waldorf, and our toilet must be simple and hasty this fine morning. Methinks I have had enough of bunking in a freight car. I feel as if some one had pounded me on each separate muscle. Hereafter the easy canal boat or the hard road for me."

"I agree," said Harold; "and I move that we seek a small hotel, where a wash, a brush, and ham and eggs for the inner man may be had at a low price. What sayest thou, Orlando?"

"I sayest that thou sayest well, by me halidom; but first show me the chapel, where I can say me prayers, minion."

"No prayers," said Harold curtly. "We are done with prayers till our tramp is ended."

Vincent laughed, blessed himself, and together they

went to a little inn pointed out by the trainman, where they put themselves into decent shape and sat down to a good breakfast with a score of laborers. The latter had to eat swiftly and hurry away. The lads could take their time and talk over matters. A weight rested on their good spirits,—a shadow as of coming evil. They had often read of tramps riding in freight cars, and had thought it would be a real enjoyment to ride to Buffalo in that fashion. One night had taken away all the romance of the ride. Looking ahead to Omaha and the plains beyond, Vincent felt that a freight-car journey to the plains would be justified only by the free gift of a ranch or a gold mine when the victims arrived at their destination. Yet they had set out to do it, and it had to be done.

“What are you thinking of?” asked Harold, as the last of the ham and eggs disappeared.

“I was just looking ahead over the road we have to travel,” said Vincent, “and thinking how we shall look at the finish.”

“So you have joined the Lookahead Club again?” Harold replied, with a grin.

“Sure as you live,” said Vincent; “though I wasn’t thinking of that. After all, Father Fleming was right. We *have* to look ahead; and the earlier we begin, the better for us.”

“Well, what’s the next step?”

“No next step. I’m so sore that I could sit right here till next month. But let us look around and see what our fortune is to be in this town. If we feel better at ten o’clock, we can catch up with our Pullman parlor car on the other side.”

They went out with halting steps, stopping occasionally to rub sore spots on their bodies; but as the sun rose higher, stiffness left them, their spirits rose again, and their visions of pleasure began to work in their soft minds. The town lay on a level plain, at

the junction of two rivers,—one coming from the Adirondack hills and uniting with the pleasant Mohawk, the river which flowed so magnificently through Fallville. At the railroad bridge they had a swim, which refreshed them at first, but a little later seemed to intensify their weariness and soreness.

"I move that we stay in this hotel for a day or two and get rested," said Vincent, as they moved painfully on to the town.

"I second the motion and declare it carried," Harold replied.

"My, but you look second-rate, not to say frazzled!" said Vincent, with a critical look at the dapper little figure of his cousin. Harold loved fine dress, and good colors, and no one among the well-dressed lads of the bank could approach him in neatness and taste. Now he looked frowzy and cheap, and it somewhat tickled the rougher Vincent to see this descent of the exquisite into the commonplace.

"And you look like a Kindergarten hobo," Harold answered, with his sharp tongue.

"What'll we look like when we get to Omaha and the plains?"

"Let us forget what must be, and turn our attention exclusively to what is here present," replied Harold, grandly.

When the bells and whistles announced the noon hour, they watched the workers pouring out of a cotton factory, and speculated on the kind of lives these people led. The men and boys wore overalls pretty well ornamented with machine oil and cotton; while the women and girls dressed rather neatly, according to taste. They went inside and found an agreeable foreman, who showed them around and explained the machinery.

"Looking for a job?" said he, with a glance at their tumbled clothes.

"Do you want any hands?" asked Vincent, with a wink for his cousin.

"We're always short," answered the foreman,— "that is, short of spinners and weavers. Do you know anything about either trade?"

"Not a thing. If we took a place here, we'd have to come in as common laborers and learn. What have you got?"

"We have place for two boys in the picker-room; wages four dollars a week. Any one can do it; and you can get board at the company house for three a week, so it isn't so bad."

"Any chance of getting on,—going up higher?"

"Right to the top, if you wait long enough," said the foreman, with a grin.

"All right. We'll think it over and let you know to-night, so's to go to work in the morning."

"I'd like to have you," replied the man, as they thanked him and went away.

"What's your idea?" said Harold, as they stood outside.

"Just to see if I could get a job. I'm looking ahead, you see. Now I have got a job for the two of us, with wages enough to support us; and if we have to take it, why there it is. I begin to feel independent."

By this time the workers had finished their hasty dinners and begun to return to the mill. The boys and men gathered in groups, before the bell rang,—some smoking and chatting, others trying their skill in jumping. The lads joined an athletic crowd, and watched with admiration various exhibitions of skill and strength. There was not much form in the exhibition,—round shoulders, bowlegs and bent ankles being too numerous; but the strength and skill were there, and the factory lads showed a toughness which the boys knew did not exist among their own class.

The best athlete among them also proved to be the best-looking — a straight, well-built, handsome lad of seventeen,— who explained to Vincent and Harold the worth of each performer, and how successful this group had been in beating all comers in that town. He took a liking for the runaways, and asked them if they were looking for a job.

“Just got one in the picker-room,” said Vincent; “but we don’t know whether we’ll go on or stay.”

“Stay,” said the young fellow. “You can’t do any better farther on. There’s a nice crowd here, with a good boarding-house. My name’s Bill Runnels.”

“We’re thinking it over,” Harold said, “and we’re to let the boss know to-night. We’ll look to you, Bill, to show us around, if we stay.”

Bill spent ten minutes describing the pleasures of the town and the victories of the factory athletes, for he was eager to add these good-looking boys to his team; and his liking no less than his arguments won the day. Vincent explained that they must now look out for a living first of all, and must be ready for anything; that a taste of rough life would do them no harm; that, with thirteen dollars in the treasury, they could leave when they felt tired of factory life. They saw the boss at six o’clock, had a plain but substantial supper in the boarding-house with the other factory hands, saw the town under Bill’s guidance, bought shirts and overalls, and went to bed in a dormitory with four others,— Bill Runnels talking them to sleep in his delight at having their company. The rough bed was a welcome change after the freight car.

They had to leave it at six in the morning, in order to get to the mill by seven. The former secretary of Mr. Willard and the former bank clerk felt rather sheepish in blue overalls, as they walked into the factory and were led to the picker-room by the fore-

man, after a cheering word from Bill, who then went about the mill boasting of the athletes he had just acquired. The foreman explained to the boys the work which they had to perform. It was simply to feed the raw cotton to a big machine, which tore it apart, shook all the dust out of it, sent the snowy cotton one way and the refuse another, and worked at terrific speed from morning till night. The boys learned how to start and to stop it, how to keep it oiled, and how to dispose of its products. All this was explained in the quiet of the big room, before the signal rang for the starting of the mill. The foreman left them to give the signal; and when it came, Vincent turned the lever of his machine and began to feed it with cotton.

In ten minutes the two boys hardly knew where they were or what had happened to them. The roar of the machinery deafened them, the vibrations of the building frightened them, the antics of the picker dizzied them, the flying dust blinded them, the cotton refuse choked them, and they seemed to be in the very heart of a cyclone of noise and dirt. They could not hear a word spoken by others; they were afraid to take a step in any direction, lest they should fall into the whirling machinery; and their distress brought the sweat out on their foreheads. It took much explanation and persuasion from Bill to make them understand that their senses would adapt themselves to the uproar, and in a day or two the mill would be as natural to them as to the other workers.

"Besides," said Bill after supper (and his voice sounded as loud as a trumpet), "I think I can fix it with the boss to give you something nicer, with better wages, in a week or two. Now, don't you worry. After you get in with the fellows, and after the next meet, you'll feel right at home."

But by the third day Bill saw that his birds would fly unless something was done to improve their hard

lot. Harold, with his delicate tastes and ways, could smell every odor, taste every flavor, of the picker-room. His mouth seemed to be full of ropy cotton, and even in his sleep he felt for the imaginary strings and drew them out. Their new overalls smelt bad at the first, but after three days at the picker they looked like overalls from the Boer war,—ragged, soaked with oil and dirt, smelling vilely.

“I don’t think we are bound to stand this sort of thing,” Harold said, when his stomach began to turn. “We ought to be worth something better, if we’re worth anything at all. How long did Bill say he stood the picker-room.”

“Nearly a year,” replied Vincent.

“One week for me, sonny.”

“Well, say a week, and then let us ask for promotion and higher wages. The work isn’t hard, and we’re well hidden from searchers. I suppose they’re looking for us.”

In fact, both boys began to feel hurt that some sign of pursuit had not appeared. At first they had not given a thought to mother and sister, supposing in a hazy way that the women would look upon the escapade as they did—an amusing lark,—and would sweetly await their return. Amid the uproar and dirt of the mill, on the second day the thought came that their relatives might be rather close on their trail. When a whole week passed and no sign of pursuit came, they had bitter thoughts of the mother and the sister. Out of sight, out of mind, Harold quoted. They had no intention of being found, but at the same time it would have pleased them to know that some one at home was making a fuss over their departure. At the end of a week of suffocation and dirt they asked the foreman for a shift and an increase of wages. He was very good-natured about it.

"I have no one to take your places," said he. "But even if I had, what can you do? If you take up any other work, you must learn it; and you will get no wages while you're learning, and not much for a long time after you do learn."

"I guess we don't care what it is," said Harold, "so long as we get out of the picker-room. If you have any work outside now, we might take that."

"There isn't a thing to suit you boys."

"Well, can you give us a raise of wages on the picker?" Vincent said.

"It never pays above four a week, and I must say that even at that rate you don't run the machine any too well."

"We aren't worth the money, then?"

"Well, I've seen the machine run better," said the foreman, smiling. "I'm not finding any fault, mind! I like you boys, and I've promised Bill Runnels to 'boost' you at the first chance."

Vincent looked at his cousin, who returned the look with indignation. The secretary and the bank clerk not worth four dollars a week! Incapable of the lowest job in a cheap cotton mill! What a jolt for jaundiced vanity! The foreman saw their wounded conceit, and hastened to salve it with information.

"To tell the truth," said he, "you boys were never made for this kind of a life. You have to be brought up to it to stand it. I knew your place when I first saw you: now I am sure of it. Don't give me away, but I'll tell you something. The chief of police here telephoned me a description of you this morning, and I told him the truth. Some one along the line is inquiring for you."

"Thank you!" said the boys together, in great excitement. "We must skip. Give us our wages, say good-bye to Bill for us, and don't let on that we have gone till we're a good ways off."

"Say, boys," said the foreman, as he gave them their money, "take a friend's advice: there's no place like home, while you have it. You are not made for the road. Go home to mother, and thank God you have her and a home."

They thanked him, shook hands with him, said they were of the same opinion, and would follow his advice when the fun was over. But they could not for a moment think of getting caught like stray dogs, and of going home in the care of the police. Their return had to be like a triumph, with plenty of money and the halos of heroes.

CHAPTER XIV.

AMONG THIEVES

AS a result of six days of hard, dirty, disagreeable labor, the two boys had eight dollars between them. When they had paid their board and deducted for their overalls, one lonely dollar grinned at them. Harold could not get over his indignation at the value put upon their work in the factory, and he talked of it for days afterwards. Vincent, too, felt angry and disgusted. But there was no time for such considerations, and they fled into the woods north of the town in order to escape the chief of police or his minions. Under the strain of their adventure, Vincent was developing qualities of sharpness; and so the planning of their journey fell to him.

"Here is what we are to do," said he, in the shelter of the woods; "and here also is the reason for doing it. If detectives are as close to us as this, you may be sure the police in the next town know about us, and will be looking for two boys. So we must walk on

byroads for twenty miles; and when we meet people, one must hide till they have passed by. That will make them think the boy they see is traveling alone. When we have made twenty miles, and slept a night somewhere, one will take a train at some depot for Syracuse, and the other will walk to the station below and take the same train. We'll have to buy tickets, because we must get ahead of the people who are searching for us."

"Fine!" Harold agreed. "I'd never have thought of that."

In fact, Harold had suffered so much from the picker-room that he looked like a hospital patient after a long sickness. Vincent saw this, but was sure he would "come around" in a few days. He himself did not look any too healthy, but his obstinate spirit resisted all thought of submission or surrender. Harold had begun to think of the soft beds, the good meals, the pleasant baths, the regular life of home, but he would not say even to himself that he regretted running away. He kept his mind fixed on the Omaha ranch and the gold mine, on the grand return which loomed up in his mind like a circus parade, with him and Vincent in a golden chariot, throwing silver to the crowd, amid the music of bands and the prancing of horses.

Vincent started a little indignation meeting over the cruelty and imprudence of Mrs. Radley and Miss Sullivan in setting detectives on them.

"Well, perhaps they began to worry about us," Harold said tremulously, for he had begun to worry about himself. His legs wobbled as they walked along the rough back roads, and he had a feeling of "all-goneness." He did not complain, because Vincent jumped along the ruts like a colt, springy and proud and obstinate as ever, and he would not give in before him.

"It's all right to worry," Vincent replied; "but the story will get into the newspapers (for the police tell everything), and we'll be talked about as tramps."

"Tramps! Well, isn't that our present form?"

"Only to get away from the pursuit," said Vincent. "We have twelve dollars in our pockets, and can take the express for Niagara, can't we? Cheer up, Softy, and be game to the last!"

To the last! Ah, Harold thought, where would that last happen? Night came on after they had walked about five miles, and it was necessary to find a house or a barn for shelter. They had travelled due north from the town, and had come into a deserted country, not much frequented by tramps and not kind to footsore strangers. An offer to pay for a night's lodging met with a sharp rebuff at the first place, and the farmer threatened to shoot them if they lingered around his barn. The next farm-house was six miles off, and they set out for it, with the intention of sleeping anywhere, if their legs failed them. Harold was mortally weary, but he would not complain. Two miles on they encountered a half-ruined barn standing a short distance from the road. It seemed to offer a shelter, and they proceeded to examine it. As they walked around it, on its farthest side they came suddenly on a fire, before which two men were seated in silence. The four gazed at one another for a full minute. Harold gave his cousin a warning pull; but Vincent did not believe in caution.

"Cadgers like ourselves," said one of the men in a hoarse voice. "Come on, kids, and make yourselves comfortable. This is our hotel. This is the clerk. You needn't mind signing the register."

"Thank you for nothing!" said Vincent easily, as he slipped down before the fire and stared coolly at the finest specimens of tramps he had ever seen.

They were cutthroats pure and simple; sober now

and as deadly as rattlesnakes, dirty and ragged, but willing to recognize the lads as members of their guild. Vincent had no fear of them, except their treachery. Darkness and speed would be enough to defy the tramps. But Harold was worn out and had to rest. They swapped experiences as the night wore on, but Harold at once found a soft corner inside the barn and fell into the deep sleep of exhaustion. The tramps held Vincent's attention for some hours. They were witty beasts, and had once been real men. Their past had become a boast for them. Their present was entirely taken up with the chances for a good meal in the morning. Finding a listener in the boy, they told him all their real adventures, with the addition of as many lies as time would permit of; they invited him to accompany them in the morning; he secured from them much advice as to how and where they could get breakfast the next day, and reach the railroad again; and all the time he studied the terrible faces and hands, the rags and dirt, the hoarse voices and odd expressions, wondering how human beings could get so low, never dreaming that he himself was now "on the road." One of the men gave him an inkling of the truth.

"How did you come to be a tramp?" said Vincent.

"I dunno; just began walking from one town to another; kept it up; liked it, in a sort of dream, just like dope, till I couldn't stop; and now I keep going from habit. I'm off to bed now."

The other continued to lecture Vincent, now with experience, now with morality, for two hours longer, when they also lay down on some ancient hay inside, and soon fell asleep. Vincent put himself between Harold and the tramps. The night was comfortable and the lads put aside hats, coats, collars and shoes, being half covered with hay. Vincent determined to remain awake the whole night, and to take his sleep the

next day when tramps were not near. With his usual confidence, he lay there, listening to the uproarious snoring of the tramps, to the sounds of nature in the dewy fields, speculating on the strange characters beside him, and the degradation of men; dreaming of his home and his mother, starting up at times to shake off the sleep stealing upon him, until at last he dropped back like one dead, and slept so until near noon the next day.

He dreamed just before waking that it would be well to conceal their money in a corner of the barn until the tramps had gone; and he was softly rising to do so when he awoke. He looked at the high sun and then around the ruined place. The tramps had gone. Harold lay in the same position, looking white and worn, and his cousin shook him awake. They scrambled for coats and shoes and hats and collars, but not a trace of these necessities was to be seen. Vincent felt in his pocket for his three dollars, Harold felt for his nine, and discovered that all was gone. Shirts, trousers and socks were now the only possessions of the runaways.

Harold began to grow wise.

"When a general is stripped of everything in a campaign," said he, "he must get back to his base for supplies and reinforcements."

"Unless," said Vincent, with great importance, "he has burned his ships and bridges, like Bonaparte crossing the Alps. Then he must go on. We'll hire out as farm hands at the next place, and stay there until we can refit."

As the lads felt refreshed after the long sleep, Harold admired the determination and wisdom of his cousin, agreed to the plan, and set out with him for the next adventure. Fool at the beginning, fool at the end, as Eddie had said.

CHAPTER XV

THE FARMER

WALKING in socks on a rough road is very distressing, the boys learned. While Vincent made light of it, his cousin did not, but began to think of many curious things. For example, he had often heard his sister and aunt complain of Vincent's obstinacy, saying that once it awoke nothing could keep the boy back from his determination. His mother's frequent warning to others was: "Don't rouse his obstinacy." Harold realized it for the first time, understood what the women complained of, and saw that he was to be the victim of it, because he had not the courage to resist the stronger will. He was sick of the journey and its accidents; he wanted home and its comforts; his nerve began to fail, and he foresaw many dangers which might destroy them, but he could not stand his cousin's fierce ridicule, and he still dreaded the return to Fallville and the loud laughter of the other fellows. It seemed to him, however, that some place near home could be found, where work would be sure and easy, and all this danger and trouble and uncertainty be saved. Yet he did not dare to say as much; and while he thought of stealing away in the night and leaving Vincent to his obstinacy, his soft heart would not consent to the desertion of his cousin.

As they toiled on, Vin descanted loudly on farm life.

"We'll get fifteen dollars a month and our board," said he; "have good meals and fine beds. With thirty dollars, a long rest and good eating, we can resume our march to the plains."

"Where does the 'long rest' come in?" Harold asked. "Aren't we to work for the money? And is there anything harder than farm work?"

"That's right!" snapped Vin. "Make everything as hard as you can, and in ten minutes we'll be heading for home, and the police will put us in baby carriages, give us bottles and safety-pins, and wheel us into mother's parlor amid the cheers of the Lookaheads and others."

This kind of talk at once silenced the wearied Harold and helped him to a more cheerful view of the situation.

Soon they came in sight of a farmhouse, and encountered a brutish-looking farmer in the dirty front yard. Vincent recalled a criticism of the tramps the night previous on this very man: that he would kill a tramp as easily as a rat and looked like a sick pig. The description was accurate. He looked at the boys affably, however, and invited them in.

"Easy to see you're in trouble," he said in a hoarse voice. "Never saw jest sech an outfit afore."

At the sound of voices a woman came to the door and stood looking at them — a weary, sad, colorless woman, who seemed to have lost all sense of interest and surprise. And presently a girl poked her head softly out of a window on the side of the house, and regarded them with delighted wonder, while Vincent explained what had happened and asked for a job.

"By gum!" exclaimed the farmer, "isn't this the luckiest thing that's happened in years? I jest lost two good boys; they got more money up Syracuse way. And I was plum crazy about getting in my hay. What wages d'ye want?"

"Fifteen dollars a month," said Vincent "and cash payment every day at the rate of one dollar for the two of us."

"High wages for boys of your size," he said, thinking it over. "But it's better'n doing the work alone. What's the idea of getting cash every day?"

"You farmers are sharper than we city folks,"

replied Vincent; "and we might work two weeks, and then get fired on a technicality without any wages. We don't work for any man except for cash."

"Square enough," said the farmer. "But I won't hire ye unless ye sign a paper saying ye'll stay a hull month at least."

"We'll do that," said Vincent.

It was all so easy that the low spirits of Harold began to rise. At the worst, they had a decent home, shelter for the night, and a chance to earn money.

The farmer, who called himself Zeke Norcross, proved a jovial man. He ordered Matilda, the girl, to set a meal for the boys, took them out into the shed where many ancient garments hung, and fitted them out in farmer style, with rough shirts and trousers, high boots and rough coats and straw hats, and then led them to the kitchen. There he left them while he got the team ready for the haying.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, and the boys were famished. Matilda had placed a pitcher of skim milk on the table and a pile of soggy bread, and then vanished. The mistress did not appear at all. Vincent looked at the eatables, and began to pound on the table for Matilda.

"Have you no butter nor cold meat?" said he.

"Sech things ain't never seen round here," she whispered; "neither is wages. You folks is caught like the others."

She vanished at once, and the boys sadly dipped the soggy bread in the skim milk and ate almost with tears. More trouble, and for what? Just to please a passing whim of Vincent's, thought Harold; when at that moment they could be sitting in their cosy home, before an attractive dinner, heaped with attentions and flatteries by a loving mother and sister! He would not stand it any longer. He was going home. Just as he looked up to speak defiance to his cousin, Ma-

tilda poked her frowzy head in the door and whispered: "If you run away he'll set the bloodhounds on ye."

"She's crazy!" said Vincent, smiling to reassure his cousin, who began to look horrified.

"You won't say so to-morrow," Matilda whispered from the door; and Vin had to shout with laughing.

Their hunger made the soggy bread and the skim milk much sweeter than a better meal; and when they had finished, Zeke was calling to them from the barn. In his rough but jovial presence fear vanished. They enjoyed the ride to the hayfield, and went to work with a vim. They were used to pitching hay as visitors to the relative from whom they had run away so rudely; but that was play to the work which Zeke Norcross took out of them. Until the last streak of light he kept them at it, and they rode home only when darkness had fallen, utterly exhausted, disheartened, and disgusted.

Zeke joked with them. At the supper table he placed a silver dollar in Vincent's hands, with a compliment for his labor, and a reminder that work began at daylight next morning. Skim milk and soggy bread were the delicacies for supper, and the boys ate heartily to fill up the gaps in their interiors. Matilda showed them to the garret, where a scraggy, skimpy bed invited them to short repose. On the stairs she whispered:

"Counterfeit dollar!"

Vincent looked at her with more interest, seeing now beneath the weird exterior a wise and daring friend. She placed the candle on a box and followed his gaze around the garret, which contained only cobwebs, two rickety chairs, and the bed. A long, deep baying from the yard startled them, and Matilda whispered from the door as she went out:

"Look out for the dogs! They're watching you."

Even the heart of Vincent sank at this last information. He tested the dollar and found it lead. He thought of the hard work and the sickly food. He looked at Harold, almost ready to drop with misery. In his mind he gave up the fight, but at the same time he resolved that he would get even with the man who had fooled them so completely. With the baying of bloodhounds in his ears, he knelt down beside Harold, and for the first time since his misfortunes began commended himself to God.

CHAPTER XVI

OTHER EXPERIENCES

THE baying of the dogs resounded in the boys' dreams, and terrified the stout heart of Vincent, who spent part of the night explaining Zeke Norcross to himself, so as to think out a plan of action. They must escape, of course; but with the stalwart scamp guarding them by day and the dogs by night, the chances were small. What was the farmer's game? What did he hope to gain by working them hard, feeding them like pigs, and cheating them of their wages? He must have done it often before, since poor Matilda knew the scheme. How had he succeeded with stubborn and determined boys? They had all escaped, since they were no longer here. Why had they not made complaint against him? Probably because, like him and Harold, they were so glad to get out of his clutches that they let the matter drop.

At four o'clock Zeke called them from their sleep in a cheery voice, saw them eat the soggy bread and the skim milk, and drove away to the fields with them in his jovial way. Vincent played the same game, and

urged Harold to imitate him; but the latter was so exhausted that he could just make the motions of pitching hay. He could neither talk nor smile.

"I'll have to dock you if you don't work harder," Zeke said good-naturedly.

"You'll be lucky if I can work at all," replied Harold; and with the word the farmer swung his fork on his head, and the boy went down in a heap.

"Why, I was jest foolin'!" he yelled, as he rushed to the boy's aid, lifted him from the ground, and set him comfortably on the hay. "By gum, he's petered out, all gone, caved in! There!—you lie there for an hour or so, and then go back to the house for the rest of the day. Matilda will take care of you."

His sympathy was so genuine that Vincent forgot the rage which seized him, and resumed his work. Harold felt better after a sleep on the hay, and took up his pitchfork again, instead of going back to the house to be nursed by Matilda. Somehow, they got through the day,—Zeke smiling, Vincent smiling back; the same kind of a supper, the same kind of a silver dollar, the mysterious remarks of Matilda, and the baying of bloodhounds all night,—which Zeke explained as necessary because of the vicious tramps. Not for a minute could the boys get out of his sight.

After a while Vincent thought that the farmer, being very miserly, just wished to get their help in storing the hay, and would let them go when the work was done. It would cost too much to keep two hearty boys all winter, even on bread and skim milk. But Matilda gave him quite another view of the situation. There was plenty of profitable work to be done on the farm all the year round; and Zeke always planned to get a grip on timid boys and men, whom he could terrify for a year into slaving for him.

"Is there any way of getting out of here?" Vincent asked of Matilda.

"Sham sick, if you can stand the lickins'," she said in her oracular way, vanishing after each special remark.

She became their one diversion. It was impossible to keep from laughing at her odd way of doing things; and the boys interested themselves in her method of dealing with the terrible Zeke, who seemed to be on good terms with her. His wife came and went like a shadow, voiceless, vacant, never disturbed or interested. The soul in her had fled. Matilda had nothing to do but keep the house in order, and set forth the soggy bread and the skim milk. The boys tried to discover how she passed her time, how she enjoyed herself, and other things; but they could never locate her except when she chose to appear. If Zeke were absent, she uttered a single sentence before vanishing; and this sentence kept them informed of the course of events. Consideration of her last statement—that shamming sickness was the only way to escape,—suggested to Vincent the proper plan to be tried. Harold was losing ground every day, as any one could see. Twice he fainted in the field; and very soon his food began to distress him, so that he ate but little.

"I think we shall have to wind up here," Vincent said one night, after Harold had crawled to bed; "because my cousin is played out; and I'm afraid, if he tries to keep up his end, he will collapse altogether."

"Don't you think he's shammin'?" Zeke drawled.

"Do *you* think so?" Vincent answered, with plain contempt.

"Well, boys will be boys," Zeke added, with a pleasant laugh; "and they can play sick in a way to fool a hull hospital staff."

"This boy isn't fooling, Zeke. He'll stay in the house to-morrow; and if in a day or two he doesn't show signs of improving, then we go home."

"And how about my contract?"

"Look out for that yourself. No one is bound to do what he can't do."

"You can't deal that way with *me*," said Zeke, and the good nature faded from his face. "That boy is shammin', you'll be shammin' next, and I'm to lose by my own kindness."

"Kindness! You call the three meals of skim milk and dead bread *kindness*? Well, I don't. Now, see here, Farmer Norcross. We're not such fools as you take us to be. We have stood your starvation and slave work long enough. We quit just now."

"Well, quit if you can," said Zeke, affably. "Go right back to town this minute, if you can outrun the dogs. Or go back to-morrow, if you think you can fight me before you go. I'm goin' to git that month out o' you, I reckon."

"Not a minute more," said Vincent, roused to his finest obstinacy. "We go first thing in the morning."

Zeke's shrill laugh followed him up to the garret, where Harold lay in a restless sleep, dreaming dreams in which bloodhounds had a terrible share. They were baying outside, and Vincent could see them strolling around the house. It was only ten miles to the town, but these animals would have a man torn to pieces before he had gone half a mile. He sat down to think the situation over. Matilda's advice seemed to be the only suitable way out of the hole into which they had fallen; and Zeke was prepared for it, by his refusal to recognize sickness as more than a trick to deceive him. He would use the lash on them, as he did on his dogs, and might easily kill Harold in his weak condition.

There remained, then, only two ways of escape: either to kill the dogs by trickery, or to fight Zeke with an iron bar in the morning. There seemed to be no way to achieve the first, and he doubted his

ability to succeed with the other; for the farmer had strength and cunning and swiftness. Vincent had none. He might surprise him; to hit a man from behind with an iron bar, even if he deserved it, was fearful. On the other hand, to live for a month on such bread and such milk working from daylight to dark to the point of exhaustion, paid in counterfeit money, was too much for human fear and human pride. Moreover, at the end of the month, if they worked fairly well, Zeke would still hold them prisoners, with his dogs and his threats, and so on for a year. Now was the time to strike for liberty, if there was any strike in him.

Vincent looked around the garret for a piece of iron, and found it in the leg of an ancient stove which Matilda used for holding up the window. He formed his plan, after some thought. Harold would stay in bed the next day, and he would ride with Zeke to the fields, get into a dispute with him, use the iron at the first chance, and then ride the farm horses to the town, where he could lodge a complaint with the justice of the peace against Norcross. He felt weak at the thought of all the trouble ahead of him,—the fight in the fields; the sight of a man lying half dead, with blood on his face; the ride to the town; the telling of the story to a judge, and perhaps a stay in jail until the matter was settled.

Oh, why did he ever get into such a scrape? How much better to have stayed at home and have endured the ridicule of the boys, to have returned to school or accepted a lesser job, than to have become the victims of this fearful man! It seemed at times as if he were dreaming his misery; as if such an adventure must be impossible; such a character as Zeke also impossible, so close to decent people, to justices and police. He looked around at the garret; he listened to the

baying of the hounds; he looked at the pallid face of Harold, and knew that it was true. He had made it true. He had sought it out, leaving home and friends; leaving the protection of the town, resisting the timid fears of Harold, who would have gone home long ago, if left to himself. He alone of all the boys in the State had delivered himself to this devil Norcross; and if he fought him to-morrow he might himself be slain and buried in the cellar, and never heard of again.

Oh, terrible thought! He had dreamed of returning home with millions, in a golden chariot, to scatter money among the populace! Now he had small chance of returning home at all; his bones might rot in the cellar of this dirty house, and his mother and friends would never even learn what became of him and Harold. He fell on his knees and began to pray for help, and that he might see home and mother again. He felt for his Scapular in the darkness, and kissed it; and, realizing for the first time that there was something desperately wicked in his conduct he began to weep. Ah, how low he had fallen in less than a month! From riding in the coach of Mr. Willard, with a fine salary and a great future, to weeping alone in the darkness of a dirty garret, with Zeke for a boss, and counterfeit coin for wages! God had deserted him deservedly. He prayed again and again; and he promised that, on his escape from this great danger, he would lead a different life. He could not sleep, so he waited for the first sign of day, thinking over his plan of escape, whiling away the doleful hours with speculation on the strange life of Zeke Norcross. How could Zeke profit by his evil ways? Matilda and the poor woman whom he called wife were evidently his victims. They worked without hope and had no further dread of him. He had broken them in like wild horses, so that they feared him more than they de-

sired anything else. How could such a character continue his infamous career in a civilized country? Oh, what evil there was in the world!

He thought of his own evil ways at home,—how he had interfered with the decent plans of Father Fleming, and had ridiculed his efforts to improve the lives of his poor boys. What wickedness, for which he was now paying in sorrow of heart, many hardships, and many tears! He could see the good priest coming out to say the early Mass, could hear his earnest voice urging everyone to a better life; and in particular he recalled his pictures of the great evil in the world. Ah, he had never believed him until now, when that evil had attacked him! A wild desire to do penance came over him. He must atone in some way for his wickedness. He must restore Harold to his sister and to life. He must even give up his life to set things right again. He would not wait another day. Out of this came his resolution to face Zeke in the morning and settle with him without delay. Instead of waiting for him in the fields, he would meet him after breakfast, when the dogs were locked up and the horses were being hitched up for work. If he had to die on the spot, he would settle his fate that morning.

When Zeke called at daylight, the boy answered sleepily, joined him a few minutes later in the kitchen, and began to eat his breakfast, with the remark that Harold would spend that day in bed. Without a word, Zeke went up to the garret and pulled the lad out of bed, with orders to report at breakfast at once, and then get out to work. Harold stumbled down in a few minutes, white with weakness and fright. Zeke looked at him with contempt; but he had a different glance for the red-haired boy with the stubborn face. In a few minutes Zeke would have paid in part for his crimes,—perhaps altogether, if a determined and enraged boy could not measure his stroke. He went

out as usual to kennel the hounds and to hitch up the horses. Matilda came in from the summer kitchen with Harold's portion of bread and milk, to which she had added a cup of hot milk as a luxury for the sick.

"Lickin's all round to-day," she whispered as she vanished; but Vincent followed her on tiptoe and caught her as she was about to dodge upstairs.

"Do you want to get away from here, Matilda?" said he.

She did not seem surprised at his action, just looked up at him and asked:

"Are you goin' to kill him?"

"Not exactly." And he had to laugh at her indifferent look.

"That's what they all say," she replied.

"And how do they all turn out?"

"Some fight till they give up, and some git done up so bad that he lets 'em go, 'cause they're no good no more."

"Do you want to get away from here, Matilda?"

"Ask me when you git back. The dogs is locked up, and he's with the horses."

This was a plain hint to begin, and Vincent slipped across the yard and into the barn. The horses were hitched and ready; and the lad jumped into the seat, with the reins in his hand, gave the horses a touch of the whip, and gave Zeke a shove of his foot as he stepped on the wheel, saw him fall to the ground, and dashed away to the side door with a yell for Harold. The whispering Matilda had Harold on the scene at the right moment, and he climbed weakly into the heavy work-wagon.

"Hold the reins and keep on going!" yelled Vincent, as he shoved the reins into his trembling hands, and took out the stove leg; for Zeke, with horrible curses, had raced after the wagon, and with one leap

had landed on the rear end just as Harold whipped the horses for the start.

The sudden movement threw Zeke backward; and Vincent added to it by a second kick, which sent him headlong to the ground. He lay stunned for a moment, with Matilda calmly observing the result from the kitchen door. Vincent cheered as the horses dashed into the main road and took the direct course for the town. But his enemy was up in a jiffy, and came loping down on them before the team could get its full speed. Vincent kept his weapon concealed; and the farmer, in his scorn for the boys and his rage at the advantages gained over him, did not take proper pains to overcome them. He seized the hind part of the wagon and clambered up, only to meet a stunning blow on his head, delivered by a firm hand and a faltering heart, which shrank from injury and death even to this besotted creature. Zeke sank down gradually in a heap, with closed eyes and blood trickling from his head near the temple. Vincent yelled to his cousin to stop the horses, while he stretched Zeke's lank, limp form in the wagon.

"Dead?" Harold asked in horror.

"I can't tell," said Vincent, gasping; "but now we must take him back to the house and leave him there."

Zeke looked very dead indeed; and they stared at him long, until a voice near by said cheerfully:

"Well, it looks as if Mr. Norcross would need the doctor!"

And there in the road, in a buggy, sat Eddie Travers and Mr. McGinnis, smiling yet serious; looking, with intense interest, beyond the boys to the recumbent form of Zeke.

CHAPTER XVII

JUST IN TIME

AT first the sound of a strange voice fell on the ears of the frightened boys like a sentence of death. Who could explain to a stranger the meaning of this terrible scene—a half-dead man, bleeding, stretched out in his own wagon, at four o'clock of a summer morning? But when their dazed eyes recognized the smiling and interested faces of friends, alarm changed into joy, and they flew to shake hands with Eddie and Mr. McGinnis, and to explain the situation. In their exultation they did not even think of the reasons which brought their Fallville friends to such a place at so early an hour. It was enough that rescue had arrived just in time.

Mr. McGinnis examined the unconscious Zeke, also the leg of the stove, and then cast a critical eye at Vincent.

"He's alive, and happier than ever he'll be again," said he, with his unfailing grin. "Now we must take him to his house, and let his family take care of him. Later on we'll hear his own story."

"He won't die?" Vincent said anxiously.

"No: his head is too hard for anything lighter than an iron club. Here now, drive back again, while Eddie and I follow behind you."

The procession solemnly entered the yard and drew up at the side door; where Matilda still remained, as interested and as decorous as if the usual had happened.

"You didn't kill him?" said she, with a look for the prostrate Zeke.

"Oh, no!" answered Vincent.

"Like all the rest!" she commented. "Bring him into the kitchen."

The four dragged Zeke into the room and laid him on the floor. His wife had not yet left her bed, so Matilda had to do the nursing. She proved very helpful, followed the expert directions of Mr. McGinnis, found whisky and bandages, and stood around until Zeke gave signs of coming back from dreamland. Then he was put to bed, as the detective thought he would be confused and helpless for some hours; and the victors assembled for explanations in the kitchen.

"First, put the horses back in the barn," Mr. McGinnis directed. "And do you, Eddie, put our horse in the shade until we want him. While you're gone I'll make arrangements for breakfast. Riding over these rough hills stirs up appetite."

While the boys were gone, he enticed Matilda from her hiding-place and gave her minute directions for the breakfast.

"Ham and eggs for four, my dear; not too well done; with fried potatoes, hot coffee made strong, your best butter, your sweetest milk, and the lightest bread you have in the house. And don't worry at this extravagance, because I represent the judge down in Herkimer, and I must have the best. You know where Mr. Norcross kept the good things for himself."

"Do you pay?" asked Matilda.

"Regular hotel rates," said McGinnis.

"What you goin' to do with him?"—jerking a thumb toward Zeke's room.

"Jail, trial, ten years in Auburn," said he, counting on his fingers.

"He's too smart for all that," Matilda replied, after a sharp look at the ruddy, fat, smiling face of the detective.

"I think he's caught this time," McGinnis said to himself, as he thought the matter over.

In fifteen minutes the brisk Matilda had a cloth on

the table, a few neat dishes, a pitcher of beautiful milk, a dish of sweet butter, a plate of fried potatoes, another of good bread, and a platter of ham and eggs, whose odor filled the room and greeted the boys as they came in from the barn. Open-mouthed, they stared at the display.

"It's a long time since you saw as much in this house," said the detective. "Well, the old man fed himself well on the sly. Fall in and be happy. The like of this may never be seen here again."

What a meal they made! Harold recovered his health and his appetite on the spot. Vincent ate like one famished, and Eddie tried to imitate the easy manner and prudent eating of his admired partner, Mr. McGinnis, who did all the talking, explained the history of Zeke Norcross, the desire of the authorities to get hold of enough evidence to prove him a criminal, and his expectation that their desire would now be gratified. Vincent took out his counterfeit silver dollars and laid them before the detective, with Matilda's explanation that they had been paid to every unfortunate laborer on the farm.

"Three witnesses to his passing counterfeit money," observed McGinnis. "Why, nothing could be finer. Now, when you've done eating, Eddie and Harold will drive to town and take a note from me to the district attorney. Vincent and I will keep house. Before night we'll have Mr. Norcross cooped for good, and by Christmas he'll be in jail."

"That's what they all said," Matilda replied, as she whisked out of the room with an armful of dishes; and the detective nodded with approval.

"She's right: he's a slippery villain. But he's caught," said McGinnis.

The boys drove off with the note for the town official; and Vincent showed the detective about the place, and heard his story of the search for himself

and Harold, still ignorant of the profession of Mr. McGinnis. He thought the red-faced gardener was a simple creature selected by his mother to hunt for her runaways; and he felt so happy that the gardener had succeeded that he barely noticed the skill of the trailer.

"The easiest thing in the world," said Mr. McGinnis, "to track a human being, unless he's very, *very* clever."

And he looked so hard at Vincent that the blood rose slowly from the boy's neck to the roots of his auburn hair, as he thought what a fool he must seem to the people at home, when a gardener and a grocery boy were chosen to track him.

"How did you track us?" said Vincent.

"First we asked about you in the freight yards, and that led us to Herkimer, where you were put off the train because the inspectors were about. The trainmen told us you intended to keep straight on; but you stopped right there, had breakfast in a little hotel, got work in the picker-room of a cotton factory, threw up the job, camped out one night with two tramps in an old barn not far from here, lost your money and your clothes, and had to take a job with Mr. Norcross, who makes a specialty of innocents of all ages."

"It's correct," said Vincent. "But how did you do it?"

"The trainmen first," said McGinnis, counting on his fingers; "then the hotel man; then Bill Runnels, who is mourning for you yet; then the boss, who told you we were coming, for the chief of police was inquiring; then the two tramps, who tried to sell your clothes in town, and got jailed for it; and then my memory of Zeke Norcross, who does his farm work with the aid of innocent travellers. When the tramps named him, I knew we had no time to lose, so we set out at three o'clock."

"And did you know about Zeke?" asked the astonished lad.

"An old acquaintance since the time I was a detective for the Central Railroad, and none of us able to catch him."

"You are a detective?" cried Vincent in utter amazement.

"A gardener at present, but I sometimes do a little professional work just to keep my hand in."

Vincent made no sign, but he felt like bumping his head against the wall; and he realized at once that not only had Farmer Zeke been cornered, but Harold and himself were also in the clutches of the law.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOOL AT THE END

EVENTS marched quickly under the direction of the smiling detective. The district attorney took charge of the criminal proceedings against Zeke Norcross. The proper forms were all carried out. The boys gave their evidence as to ill treatment and the counterfeit money; and Matilda, assured by the State officials that Zeke must go to jail, supported that evidence with her own. She was placed in charge of a lady who would see that she appeared at the trial. Two constables were to take care of Zeke, after a doctor had pronounced his recovery sure and immediate. The boys were ordered by the State to appear at the trial and give their testimony against their persecutor. By that time they were all in the hotel at Herkimer, and there was nothing to do but go home. Eddie had sent a telegram to Mrs. Radley and Miss Sullivan with the happy news of a speedy return of the whole party.

Vincent and Harold were so eager to see Zeke get his dues, so ready with the proper testimony, that Eddie took their return home for granted, until Mr. McGinnis gave him a warning.

"Young Sullivan is sick of tramping, but Radley is going to skip as soon as Norcross is in jail. Never mind asking why. Just look after him. Use your influence to change him. He's a born mule. And, to help you, I'm going to leave for home early in the morning, so that he may feel he's not being driven home. If I take him home by the collar he'll run away again. If he's let alone, and you talk straight and strong, he may go home of his own accord."

Eddie was utterly dismayed by this information. He would not have believed it from another, but he had seen enough of the detective's sharpness to know that McGinnis could not be deceived in so trifling a matter. Vincent had shown the experienced man his plain intention to continue his journey to the West, if he could get away. Harold had informed Eddie, on the way to town, that tramping and seeking a fortune were not to his taste, and that he would never leave home and civilized life again. He thought Vincent felt the same. For a time Vincent *had* felt the same. The hopelessness of the life on the Norcross farm, the desperate character of Zeke, had softened him; but when he found that a professional detective had discovered and rescued him, that he would be returned home in bonds like any other runaway, his pride revolted, the old obstinacy again took fire in his breast, and he resolved to keep on Westward. He took the first chance to suggest flight to Harold, but that young man had lost his nerve completely; and, while he fell in with the arguments of Vincent, he made up his mind that the luxurious life of home, even salted with ridicule, was a great advantage over the life of the road.

Vincent planned an early hour of the morning for

their departure, in order to outwit the detective. But, on hearing of the departure of Mr. McGinnis for home, he began to take things easily; and determined on a short stay in town, to see Bill Runnels and the factory from a different point of view. So Eddie found an opportunity to talk with him sociably on the return home.

"I'm not going home," said Vincent. "Do you think me a fool, to go back with the senior detective and the junior detective, and have the town pointing me out as the former secretary of Mr. Willard, rescued and captured and brought back as a runaway, by the eminent Mr. McGinnis, and the still more eminent Eddie Lookahead, the grocery boy? Oh, my!"

"Then you didn't get enough of parlor cars and counterfeit money?" said Eddie.

"And picker-rooms and tramps," Vincent added. "No: I'm hungry for adventure; and I'm going to the ranch and the gold mine, even if the Chinese wall stood in the way."

"And how about your mother? Isn't she to be thought of?"

"Mothers can stand such things," said Vincent, somewhat surprised. "All their boys go away from home, and they don't mind."

"They don't mind!" said Eddie, with indignation. "Well, you should have seen your mother for three days after you had gone! She made me afraid. Her eyes had black circles and were sunk in her head. I heard her more than once walking around the house at two in the morning, and crying just awfully. I covered my head with the clothes and said I wouldn't be a brute like you for all the money and fun in the world. The priest had to come and talk to her. Mr. McGinnis told her that you could take care of yourself, and that he would find you in a week. I think she would have died but for him and Father Fleming.

And Miss Sullivan was just as bad. And now you say you will keep that up, and probably kill your mother. Nice, kind, generous boy! It must be pleasant for mothers to have boys like you."

This language was not the persuasion which the detective expected from his assistant; but it came straight from Eddie's honest heart, from his indignation against the thoughtless and cruel Vincent; and it cut like a knife into the other boy's sensitive hide,—not because it was true, but because Eddie Travers was the one to speak the ugly truth. So he answered:

"I'm going West, and you can tell my mother that I'll go back to her when I've found that ranch or that gold mine. Harold will go with me. We are well able to take care of ourselves."

"Not quite," Harold ventured to say. "We lost every time from the day we started till the law took up our case. You can keep on, Vin; but I'm going home."

"Then I go alone," Vincent replied, with a sinking of the heart. "I said I'd go and I'll keep my word to myself. If I find nothing out West, I'll get back some time and fit myself for a cook on a cattle steamer to Europe. Now don't object, Eddie; it's no use. I'm off in the morning, and your talk won't hold me."

"And your mother? How about her? I telegraphed her. Mr. McGinnis will tell her you are coming. Don't kill her. Come home now and run away some other time. You can get to a ranch or a gold mine decently: don't go like a tramp."

"Come on home with us," said Harold, "and make a family picnic."

"No: I'm off in the morning!" repeated the obstinate boy; so that angry Eddie said aloud:

"Fool at the beginning, fool at the end!"

"Perhaps," Vincent said cheerfully, satisfied at enraging Eddie; "but I keep my word."

"And I keep mine," Eddie answered. "I told your mother I would not go back till you did, and I'll keep my word."

"You just keep out of this mix-up," said Vincent. "I don't forget what I owe to you; but you must mind your own business, and let me mind mine."

They argued in this fashion all day, between their visits to the factory and Bill Runnels; and the only result was the more vehement declaration from Vincent that he would set out the next day. Eddie wondered what should be done to check him, but deferred action until the next morning, in the hope of a change of mind.

Although the three occupied the same room, Vincent slipped away at midnight, and must have been miles to the West when his comrades woke at eight. His heart was bitter at the desertion of Harold, bitter against the charges of Eddie, and bitter at his own feelings; for he knew that Eddie was right about his mother, that he should at least go home this time, and that only a brute would repeat his performance. He fled for all that, and threw his friends into renewed despair.

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE CANAL

EDDIE could hardly eat his breakfast, so eager was he to begin the pursuit; but first some plan of action had to be made out, in order to work quickly and well. He had watched the methods of the genial McGinnis so closely during the past week, and had listened so well to his reasonings, that he could imitate him nicely in many things. Before breakfast was finished he had fixed all the details of his scheme.

"You must take the first train home," said he to

Harold; "because the women folks will be just crazy until they see you. It will help poor Mrs. Radley to bear up a little longer when she sees you. And your sister will be so happy that she will cheer up her aunt."

"And what will you do?" said Harold.

"Keep right on after Vin. I'm like Mr. McGinnis: I feel that I can put my finger on him any minute. I'll keep near him, do the best I can, and let his mother know by letter every few days where he is. That will help keep her spirits up."

Although Harold felt like joining in the pursuit, he was also eager to get home, and to relieve the suspense of his sister. No more romantic runaways for him; no more ranches and gold mines. There was nothing sweeter in all this world than the pleasant home, in view of the Falls. So he took the first train for the East, and left Eddie standing alone in the Herkimer depot, quite comfortable and determined.

What a surprise to Eddie, as he turned back to the hotel, to meet the smiling detective, rosy and cool, as if he had just finished a leisurely breakfast!

"Where's the other fellow?" said he, with a look at the departing train.

"Gone at midnight, and we two sleeping at our post," answered Eddie, blushing.

"Just as I thought," said McGinnis. "And that's why I came back, after going down the road a bit. Now what are you going to do?" And he watched Eddie closely, taking great delight in his calculations, and his serious, old-man way of setting forth his views.

"He had only five dollars," said Eddie, "and he was always talking about how far a traveller could go West on the canal. Now he's bound to keep that five dollars in his pocket as long as he can. He has gone West. If he went by freight, he knows we might catch him; so he has taken to the canal as a driver or

a deck-hand. My plan would be to take train to Oneida, then hire a rig and ride back on the towpath. I'd be sure to meet him driving a pair of mules."

"I couldn't do it better myself," said the detective. "And after that?"

"Persuade him to come home with me, or stay with him and keep writing to his mother every few days."

"Perfect!" said Mr. McGinnis. "Go ahead on that plan, and I'll stay here a while to look into the Norcross affair again. You can write or telegraph me. If anybody can save that stubborn, pig-headed boy from himself you are the one to do it."

What praise from a really great man! How it warmed Eddie's heart! He set out on his pursuit, with the determination to find and restore Vincent to his poor mother; and McGinnis stood looking after the train that bore him away, nodding his head in strong approval.

Meanwhile what of the more determined Vincent? He had thought out his plans during the day, and had made some of the arrangements. A chance inquiry among boatmen idling along the canal while a cargo was taken on, led to his securing a place as a driver on a boat that would leave at midnight. So he went straight from the comfortable room and bed at the hotel to the rough, ill-smelling quarters of a bow cabin in a canal-boat. The stable for the mules was just beside it; four bunks crowded the narrow space, none too clean; and there was hardly room to dress. Vincent had secured the overalls which Harold and he had used in the factory; his good clothes he folded and hid under his bunk; and he fell asleep to the swish of water outside, the stamping of the mules next door, and the long calls of the deck-hands and the lockmen as they travelled onward. He felt perfectly happy, because he had got ahead of everybody, and had shown that he was his own master. But for some reason he

could not say his prayers that night, could not even turn his thoughts to God.

At six o'clock he was called to do his share of the driving. He had the day shift that week, and the next week would have the night shift. He had to dress quickly, go in among the mules and prepare them for the day's labor; and then drive them out of the hold onto the towpath, while the other driver and his mules came aboard and settled down to a day's rest.

The morning sun looked upon the most peaceful and gentle of scenes. The canal stretched away through an almost level country, like a silver ribbon on a green ground. The fields sparkled with dew like diamonds. The sweet air filled his body with delight. He was at least eighteen miles ahead of his pursuers, and so much nearer the golden West. A good breakfast in the neat rear cabin, served by a sad woman who spoke not a word, had raised his spirits. He did not even miss the timid weakling, Harold, and felt stronger for being alone. He was glad that his courage had not failed before the inducements set by Eddie Travers. He was going to see the great world, to become part of it, to earn a ranch, and to find a gold mine; and this towpath, dusty with the tramping of mules, was the highroad to a great fortune.

The beautiful vision lasted all day until the sun began to go down in the late afternoon. The sun had beaten on him, the dust had lined his nose and throat; the monotonous travel, three miles an hour, had deadened him; weariness began to beat him to the ground. And then his bright spirits changed; tears gathered in his eyes; he thought of the bunk near the stable and the next day's journey; he thought of Harold at home listening to the roar of the great Falls; and all at once he saw a picture of Helen Sullivan smiling on her brother, and his poor mother walking the floor all night, weeping for him. He tried to banish the sad

thoughts and the sad scene; he talked to the patient mules in a loud voice; he threw stones at the leaping fish; he sang songs and joked with the lock-tenders. All in vain. As his weariness increased, the vision of his mother grew stronger, and he heard again the terrible words of Eddie Travers:

"I wouldn't be a brute like you for all the money and all the fun in the world."

At seven o'clock Vincent drove his tired mules aboard, watered and brushed them down, took a swim in the canal, and then went in to supper. It was a curious place, the cabin aft: so small that to look at it one would think two persons would be a crowd there; yet it was quite able to accommodate four at table, leaving space for the mistress to move about while serving her guests. The neatness of the cabin and of its owners showed their respectability. A crucifix hung on the wall, and a little altar of the Holy Family stood on a shelf over the table. Captain Morin and his wife had the faith and the decency of their Canadian ancestry; but while he was vivacious and chatty, his wife spoke very little.

The two took a great fancy to Vincent. His big head and shock of golden hair, the tender expression of his large blue eyes, although somewhat belied by the obstinacy and harshness of his face, would attract any one. The Morins knew at a glance that he did not belong to the canal, but they were so used to the sons of the rich and the great as drivers and deck-hands that this did not interest them. His wife spoke to the Captain in French several times during the meal, and finally she asked Vincent point-blank if he had a mother at home. So suddenly did the question come that he could not keep back the tears, as he answered sourly that he had.

After supper they all sat out on the deck, enjoying the evening air, the pretty scenes along the canal, and

telling stories of other days. The deck-hands went off to bed, but the Captain stayed Vincent.

"You must excuse my wife," said he; "but it's her way with boys, and she can't help it. We meet many youngsters, and mostly she is silent, because she knows it's no use. Then she meets others, and she must ask questions,—she must know why they are so far from home, and if they have mothers. You are one of these."

"Why is she concerned about some and not about others, Captain?"

"You would not understand, I guess," said the Captain, thoughtfully. "Did you notice that she speaks very little?"

"I did, because most women talk a good deal," Vincent replied.

"She has been that way five years; she will be that way always, I guess; and she was the liveliest woman you ever saw before that. Then our boy, our one boy, ran away to make his fortune; and we have never seen him, never heard from him since. He was a good boy and he looked like you. He would be twenty-two now."

"Not a single word of him?"

"As if the ground had swallowed him. I spent money, no use. I feared he was murdered, but we got track of him when he took a cattle ship to London. After that, nothing. My God, but death is a blessing to it, I guess!"

"You have no other children?"

"Three nice girls, but the boy has just spoiled everything for their mother. She simply looks at them and no more. The doctor says her mind is affected,—not much, but too much for us. The first year I thought we would all go crazy with her. She walked the floor all night, crying like one in great pain. We were so glad when that stopped that we bear her silence

quite well. When she meets a boy like you, she says that his mother must have loved him deeply, and that she is weeping for him all night. Then she is not content until that boy returns home. Have you run away from home, my lad?"

But Vincent could not speak, for sobs were choking him and tears were streaming down his face. He recalled Eddie's description of his mother walking the floor all night, crying aloud for her son; he measured the grief of this poor woman by her five years of anguish, by her silence, and by that injured mind which could never be cured; and he was filled with horror at his own crime, his desertion of his mother, whom he had exposed to the same sorrow and the same danger.

The kind Captain patted his shoulder and said:

"Make her happy, and make my poor wife happy, by going home to-morrow. If you need money, we can give it to you. We have paid the fare home for many a poor boy who, without thinking, brought such grief on his parents. Will you go?"

"I will go," said Vincent. "When we get to Syracuse, I will go. I have the money, thank you!"

All at once conscience and love had wakened in his heart, and knowledge had come to him. Poor Vincent had plenty of heart but no brains, and his natural courage was spoiled by his obstinacy and his pride. He passed a terrible night. His brain worked on the story of Captain Morin's lost boy; and in his dreams he pursued him, urging him to return, because his mother had lost her mind, and would soon lose her life for his great sin; then he got back home, only to find that the poor mother was dead; and when he looked into the coffin on the dolorous face of the dead woman, he saw his own dear mother lying there, white and sorrowful, with that sorrow which he himself had given her by his sin; and he raised his voice in such a wail of grief and horror that the deck-hand in the op-

posite bunk sat up out of his sleep, with his hair on end; then reached over and shook him awake, with bitter remarks for his inconvenient nightmare.

Vincent struggled out of his bunk and climbed on deck to get the fresh air of morning. The stars were shining, although the first touch of dawn lightened the east, and the cocks were crowing in the far-off barnyards. Sobs shook him, for he had begun to fear. Perhaps this dream was a warning of what was coming. His mother might now be dead, and the next visit of the detective would be to tell him the date of the funeral. He knelt on the deck and prayed fervently for forgiveness, for the life of his mother, and for the poor woman whose son would never return.

At breakfast Vincent watched the Captain's wife closely, seeing that her face looked dead like a mask, her eyes had no life, and her actions seemed to match her eyes. A photograph of her lost boy hung under the crucifix. He had indeed been her cross, and the oilcloth on the floor was worn with her kneeling.

"I am going home to-day, when we come to Syracuse," said he. "I am sorry I ran away from my mother. I did not know mothers thought so much of their children."

"Perhaps the mothers are to blame," she answered; "but we think we show our love every minute. Your mother will be so glad."

He went out to his mules with a lighter heart, and before noon was singing as he trudged along behind the patient animals. His fears of the night vanished, and he had to resist a temptation to stick to his Westward march. Why should mothers make a fuss over what must be? There was no answer to the question, only the story of that poor desolate woman on the boat behind him. So long as running away set them crazy, common decency demanded that children should stay at home until they could leave in a proper manner.

Eddie was quite right to say what he did; and Eddie could appreciate a mother, because he never enjoyed the love and ministrations of his own. Yes, he would go home and face the ridicule of the town for his mother's sake; but he would go home in his own way, without the aid of the police or their assistants.

He had reached that satisfactory point when a carriage came along the towpath and drew rein beside him. Eddie smiled on him from the seat and greeted him.

"Still playing detective, Eddie?" said he, with a laugh. "Well, your job is over. I'm done when we get to Syracuse. There I'll take the first train home. But you must get away ahead of me. I don't go back with detectives. Where's the other one?"

"Looking after Zeke Norcross," said Eddie. "Well, I have your word that you will take train for home to-day?"

"My word!" said Vincent, grandly.

"All right! Then I'll take the first train from this town here, where I hired the rig, and be home ahead of you. Good-bye and good luck!"

He turned away and drove down the towpath, satisfied that Vincent would keep his pledged word, as he always did. Eddie sensed some change in the boy for the better,—something like a brightening of his whole nature, which he could not describe, but which made him feel good as he rode back to report to Mr. McGinnis in Herkimer.

CHAPTER XX

OUR SINS PURSUE US

ONCE an idea lodged in Vincent's brain, it seemed to irritate and drive him forward until it got expression. He was so shame-stricken at his likeness to the unfortunate son of Captain Morin, so horrified at the suffering which he had thoughtlessly inflicted on his dear mother, that he felt his return home could not be too speedy; and he kept his eyes on the horizon ahead, eager for the first signs of the city of Syracuse, where he should take the train for Fallville. He would take a fast train and so be there for supper. Oh, if he had only followed his decent thoughts and gone home with Harold and Eddie two days ago! He must, indeed, be a brute, after Eddie's vigorous reproaches, to have added more suffering to what his mother had already endured on his account.

He had money enough to spend on a telegram at Syracuse, which would inform Mrs. Radley that he would arrive on the afternoon train from Schenectady. Then he began to think of Eddie Travers' appearance on the towpath, and the evil in him rose up again. That boy seemed to be always following him when he was in trouble. He had to admit that Eddie appeared just in time to save him from disaster. He had pulled him out of the river in the nick of time, and he had saved him from Zeke Norcross at the right moment. Perhaps a new danger threatened him now, when Eddie discovered him on the towpath. But no: he was in the hands of good friends. Anyway, he had made up his mind that he would not return home in the company of two detectives. Who would ever dream that a clown like Mr. McGinnis could be a real

detective, able to do wonderful things besides raising fruits and vegetables? For all that, he would not go home with those two friends. He wanted to look on them as hateful enemies, always interfering with his plans; but his mind informed him positively that Mr. McGinnis was a clever detective, and that Eddie Travers was the best boy that ever wore shoes. Still, he would not go home in their company. He knew just what they were doing at that moment. They were following him to Syracuse; they would watch him until he got on the train; they would take the same train and watch each station to see if he got off; and they would keep out of sight all the time. He would show them that, with all their smartness, they could not keep pace with him in cunning.

When they came to Syracuse and he made ready to leave, Mrs. Morin gave him his last dinner, and also some advice which startled him. She seemed sadder than ever that day, although she had done a good action in persuading this obstinate boy to go back to his mother; and she looked often at the picture of her lost son, where it hung under the crucifix. She spoke at last, and told Vincent all about that poor boy,—his goodness of heart, his kindly ways, his obstinacy, and his final ruin. She forgave him all that he had made her suffer, because he did it in ignorance. He never knew how much she loved him, never dreamed her happiness was so bound up in his welfare. God would forgive him too, because of his ignorance.

“But, alas!” said she, “in this life as in the next, our sins pursue us. We can not escape them until we have paid up to the last penny. We must do penance for our sins, or they will follow us up, and we shall be punished when we least expect it. You have sinned, Vincent, against your mother and the commandment of God, which bids you honor your parents. Now fear the punishment. Be on the lookout for it. Be on

your guard. Go straight home as fast as you can; do not look to the right or the left until you are kneeling at your mother's feet and saying, 'Mother, forgive me; I knew not what I did!' And after that go to confession and Communion; take the trouble and the shame as your penance, and make much of them. Oh, you will be very fortunate if you get home safe, and see your dear mother again as you left her!"

Vincent became very white at this, and Captain Morin gently reproved his wife for frightening the lad with her warnings.

"Ah, if we had but frightened our boy when he was ours," said she, "how good it would have been for him and us!"

"She is right," said Vincent, with shaking voice. "I shall be lucky if God forgives me for my meanness, because I never thought of my mother, and she was always thinking of me. And I knew better, because Father Fleming, our priest, always kept telling us how much we owed to our parents. But I thought I knew better than he did. Good-bye, Mrs. Morin, and thank you! I will write and let you know if I get home safe."

The Captain went with him to the depot, saw him buy his ticket, shook hands with him heartily, and promised to stop and see him on the return trip from Buffalo; for the Erie Canal passed through Fallville. And Vincent was so glad to be on his way home that he forgot all about the detectives, and had travelled many miles before he thought of them at all. His mind was occupied with what the Captain's wife had said about our sins pursuing us, and about his good luck if he found his mother at home just as he had left her. He became terribly afraid of his sins against her, and wondered how he could turn into such a brute as not to know that his running away would frighten her to death. God had now a right to punish him, and

how easily He could do it! Grief might sicken and kill his mother, as it had crazed poor Mrs. Morin. The train might run off the track and kill him on his way. He prayed fervently against these calamities, and promised God to do penance for the rest of his life. Yet in another minute he had forgotten his promise, and did not see the very first opportunity given him to do penance.

All at once he thought of the detectives, and of his plan to outwit them. His pride rose up violently against them. He would not go back in their company. He would even sacrifice his ticket, and get off at the next station, rather than accept their escort. So he walked cautiously through the train, examined every soul aboard, from the baggage-car to the Pullman, in order to make sure Eddie Travers and Mr. McGinnis were not travelling with him. Inquiries followed the examination. There was no trace of their presence, although they might be riding in the cab of the locomotive with the engineer.

The change to Fallville was to be made at Schenectady; and as the train rushed into the depot, he saw the two detectives standing on the platform near the train which he would have to take for home. Eddie had accepted his word and gone on ahead, and evidently they did not look for him on that train; for both were chatting with acquaintances, and did not seem to be looking for him. That should have softened him, but his obstinacy was again aroused. His better sense urged him to make sure of his return in such friendly company, and the warnings of Mrs. Morin sounded in his heart: to get home quickly, and take no risks of delay. Still, he would listen to nothing but his pride. He was only sixteen miles from home now, and he could take the next train, which would not be due until seven o'clock. His mother would be disappointed again, but he could send a tele-

gram fixing a later hour for his return. He knew that she was now full of joy over the first telegram, and a few hours' delay would not matter. Better than either delay or telegram, he could get a ride on the first freight that went out; for he knew all the railroad men on that division of the road. Ah, if his Good Angel had only warned him that part of the happiness of his life depended on his getting home as soon as possible!

He slipped off the train on the side opposite to where his friends were standing, and hurried into the depot. After the train had borne away Eddie and Mr. McGinnis, he went out into the railroad yard, and inquired of his friends as to the next freight. With joy he learned that a through freight would pull out in ten minutes, would take only three-quarters of an hour to reach Troy, and would pass through Fallville so slowly that he could easily jump off. The trainman showed him an empty car. He opened the door and jumped in swiftly, so that no one could see, and closed the door behind him. Then he sat in the darkness until the train had left the city, and was bumping along over a track that ran between lovely fields, with the Mohawk River showing in the distance.

He had opened the door an inch to let in light and fresh air, when a rough voice from the rear of the car roared at him:

"Shut that door!"

Startled and frightened, he obeyed; and then a lantern suddenly appeared in the gloom, and his heart sank like lead to the bottom of a stream at what he saw. Six dirty tramps rose up from a crouching posture in the far end of the car,—lowest of the low, monsters in appearance and in disposition; and he knew that his sins had pursued him. Oh, why had he not done the sensible thing and gone home with his friends? Was he always to be the same kind of a fool, learning nothing from his perilous adventures? Was he to fulfil

Eddie's terrible saying, "Fool at the beginning, fool at the end"? He might just as well be in a den of wolves as with these six human beasts of prey. They were a morose crowd, who had failed that day to get their poisonous portion of whiskey and beer, had been chased by the police, and had barely escaped with their freedom and dirt from the town. But the wild humor of their besotted class did not fail them, and the man with the lamp swung it over Vincent and then turned to his gang.

"Behold," said he, in a raucous voice but with the airs of an accomplished actor, "how fortune favors the fair and the brave! Here is a noble youth! Why do I say 'noble'? Because, forsooth, he has money in his clothes. Mercutio, relieve him of his coin and pass over the same to me; and if one cent vanishes, you shall be straightway thrown off the train."

Mercutio and the gang gathered about the terrified Vincent, and watched the process of taking his money. It amounted to one dollar and fifteen cents.

"Is that all?" said the leader, disappointed. "Let me examine him. Ah, here is a bundle! Tybalt, look into it and report, while I with dexterous fingers examine the seams of his garments."

"By me halidom, nothing!" was his report, while the others passed upon the pawn-shop value of Vincent's clothes. It was decided that the boy represented only five dollars to the company of freebooters.

"Are you not ashamed, varlet?" cried the leader, giving Vincent a shove which threw him against Tybalt, who threw him against another; and for a few minutes they amused themselves with this game, until Vincent, enraged, broke away from the circle, and braced himself in a corner with an accidental stick which he picked up from the floor.

They straightway forgot him in the pleasure of recounting the money, and arguing on the possible value

of the clothes. The leader proposed a game of cards for the purpose of deciding to whom the separate garments should go, and this led to endless disputes as to who cheated least and most. Vincent would have enjoyed the scene for its humor, but for his own dolorous position, and for the dreadful fear which had sprung up in his heart. Would he escape alive? For these sodden creatures thought no more of murder than of eating. Not a human fibre remained in their hearts and minds. If it occurred to them that flinging him from the train at full speed was a diversion, they would fall upon him, beat him into insensibility, and fling him forth with shouts of laughter. He prayed as he had never prayed before; he pleaded with God to forgive his sins, and not permit them to crush him; he promised to love and respect his friends for evermore; and he wept in the darkness, because he felt that his punishment had come and could not be avoided. With his usual courage, he resolved that an assault should be met with the best defence he could put up. He had a chance at Fallville, unless the tramps should notice the slowing up of the train and take charge of the door.

Mercutio and Tybalt won nothing in the game, but lost whatever they had; so they turned their attention to the boy in the corner.

"Methinks this ruffian youth hath too many fine clothes upon his person," said one to the other; "and, with the permission of our right royal and worshipful master, who has stripped us of all, we shall also strip the youth of all."

"Granted," said the chief, indifferently.

"Come, fair youth, mamma's darling!" said Tybalt, as the two rascals advanced upon Vincent. "Surrender what clothes still remain to thee."

Vincent raised his stick and gripped it for a good blow; and the tramps paused a few feet away, cursing him in hoarse voices, while the others looked up from

their cards and laughed at them for their cowardice. The train was approaching Fallville, and had gradually reduced its speed. It was now or never with Vincent. He heard the whistle which sounded the approach of the train to the yard, then poked his stick into the dirty face of Tybalt and sent him in a heap on the card-players; afterward he brought the stick down on the head of Mercutio with a tremendous whack; rushed through the crowd, smashed the lamp with a kick, and then threw open the door with a yell which was heard by every man in the yard, on the train, and around the station. The tramps lost their heads, with the exception of their leader, who saw Mercutio fall, the lamp smashed, and the door thrown open by the infuriated boy. He knew that the yell would bring the train to a stop, and every trainman to a murderous attack on his band (for railroad men know the professional tramp through bitter experience); and that they would have to scatter and foot it to Troy, if they did not end in jail.

Vincent threw open the door, seized the loose iron clasp and prepared to swing off the train, when the chief stretched out his foot, gave him the trip, and then struck his hand a sharp blow. The lad fell under the train, with a scream of terror so piercing, and following so closely on his first cry, that the tramps tumbled out of the car and fled, while men came running in all directions, and the station man signalled the engineer to stop.

Alas, the terrible injury was done beyond recalling! They found a boy lying near the track, alive but unconscious, apparently untouched, until they examined him; when his right foot dangled, and the men recognized that the train had passed over the leg just above the ankle, and the shock of the fall and the fright had left him senseless. But why the yell of warning and the shriek of terror? One look at the empty car, with its

scattered cards, smashed lantern, and dirty clothes, explained the case, and set the men running in every direction after the tramps, who, with the aid of the police, were all caught and caged on a charge of murder before the night set in.

Thus poor Vincent Radley came home! After all his plans, all his dreams of returning with money in a golden chariot, after his determination to return at least free and unhampered by the officers of the law, and with his escapade unknown, here he lay on the open road, surrounded by a crowd of trainmen, doctors, and policemen, a maimed and disgraced boy. It seemed a long time until the distressing details were over, and he lay in bed, pale and exhausted, after receiving the last Sacraments from Father Fleming, after giving his deposition to the officers of the law and recognizing his would-be assassin, with his mother beside him, holding his hand; and Eddie in the distance, with tear-wet face, ready for any service to mother and son. Alas, alas, how our sins do pursue us, even into the days of our repentance and atonement!

CHAPTER XXI

DOING PENANCE

EDDIE often wondered at the strange way in which good springs out of evil. He saw so many examples of it daily that he got the habit of looking for it; and as he sat one night in the common room, with Harold chattering on one side and Vincent arguing in his positive way on the other, he thought of it the more. Here they were together in the old room, as "chummy" and loving as in past days; but his comrades had changed so decidedly for the better that they did not seem to him just the same

boys. The evil of the summer escapade had been a terrible thing, and was still a horrible memory; for Vincent sat with the injured leg on a chair, the clothes concealing the absence of foot and ankle, while the crutch close by told the mournful story. Yet out of that evil had come a boy so noble in thought and word and feeling that Harold and Eddie seemed rather commonplace beside him.

Vincent was so handsome a fellow, with his sunny hair and his white skin, his delicate hands and straight figure, that the patience and resignation of his new self shone like two diamonds in a beautiful setting. Eddie had always secretly worshipped him; now he loved him better than himself, and would cheerfully have died to serve him. In the long sickness Harold and he had cared for him, according to the hospital nurses, better than the nurses themselves. When he was brought back to his mother's house, Harold took care of him, as he had nothing to do, and with much seeking could find no position worth while. Eddie spent all his free time at Vincent's side. Never before had the three boys been so much together, or enjoyed so good an understanding of one another. The run-aways had a fixed opinion of Eddie: that for courage, goodness and cleverness there was not another like him in the whole world. Themselves they had marked down, to use their own expressive commercial phrase, from one hundred thousand dollars to thirty-nine cents. Harold was even willing to go to work as a newsboy, but neither his sister nor Eddie would permit this.

Father Fleming dropped in often to see the patient, quite carried away with the beautiful disposition which had developed in Vincent under the chastening influence of calamity. There seemed to be nothing to teach him in humility and patience.

"Experience is a terrible teacher," he said to the priest, as he looked at his maimed leg. "But I can

see now that I am one of those fellows who do not learn well under any other teacher. My head is very hard." And he rapped it as if to show that the natural hollowness was not in it.

"Make sure that you have learned this first lesson so well that you will never need the terrible teacher again," was Father Fleming's warning.

"Who can be sure of that?" said Vincent, humbly. "But I have a fine reminder of the teacher in this crutch."

Harold bore his idleness patiently, and spent some time daily studying the town and the chances for a desirable position, practising diligently at arithmetic and bookkeeping so as to be prepared. His sister worried over the matter, and finally sought Eddie's advice and help.

"I am thinking of going to New York to live," said she; "and, now that there seems to be nothing for Harold to do in Fallville, I really think it would be better in every way for him and me to leave here."

"Well, if you go to New York," said Eddie, "I can give him a letter of introduction to Mr. Sullivan, who told the Lookaheads that he would help any one of them to a job, to oblige Father Fleming."

"Thank you!" said Miss Sullivan, hardly able to keep from smiling at the simple, old-fashioned speech. "And I'm sure a letter from you would go a good way with Mr. Sullivan."

"But, then, I don't really think that Harold needs to leave town," Eddie continued. "I've been looking out for him, and I think he can secure a place in another bank, if he can get the right recommendation."

"Would they take a boy that had been dismissed from one bank for a serious fault?"

"Oh, yes, because Harold was just tardy, and he did not mind when he was warned about it! His general conduct was all right."

"And how do you think he could get the right sort of a recommendation?" said Miss Sullivan, who had come to regard Eddie with great respect and affection, and was also curious to learn how he managed to do things so well.

"If Father Fleming would speak to Mr. McGinnis for him," Eddie replied, "there is a place in the Washington Bank which will soon be vacant, because Jack Lorimer is going out West. Mr. McGinnis is a director in the bank."

"I should be afraid to ask Father Fleming to do anything," observed Miss Sullivan; "he has been so kind, and the boys have not returned his kindness, except by giving him trouble."

"Father Fleming doesn't mind that, because he's used to it. And, then, you know, Harold has been very good since he came back, and he never was worse than being a little careless."

"Would you mind speaking to him and to Mr. McGinnis?"

"If you say so, I'll do it, Miss Sullivan."

"It will only add another item to what we owe you," said the young lady, so fervently that Eddie blushed. "But you surprise me very much about Mr. McGinnis. Is he so well off that he can be a director in a bank?"

"He must be, and he is a great man, Miss Sullivan. I used to think he was nobody; but, since the summer, I have heard ever so many things about him that make him seem different to me. And he is the kindest and bravest man in the world."

Eddie felt some hesitation about speaking to the great man, because it did look like trading on his good nature to ask him to place a boy whom he had pursued as a detective. But Eddie would face the Czar of Russia in behalf of a friend; and so he called on Mr. McGinnis in his house at the end of the garden, and found Father Fleming with him. He would have with-

drawn, but the priest insisted on his sitting down and attending to business.

"Here is a boy," said he, "that once thought the owner of the Sand Bar a very poor stick, but who has changed his mind and looks upon him now as a wonder."

"Well, I may say the same for myself," the detective answered, with his broad grin. "I thought Eddie an imp; but after our little trip together, I'm ready to back him for Congress. I can tell by his looks that he's after something, and of course it's for somebody else."

"You can tell what most people are thinking of," said Eddie, full of admiration. "I came over to ask you to get Harold a place in the Washington Bank. Jack Lorimer is going to leave soon, and his place will be vacant."

"Why not take the place yourself, Eddie?" said the priest.

"I'm not going to be a banker," said Eddie, "but a grocer. I must stick to the business until I learn it."

"Banking is better," said Mr. McGinnis.

"I suppose so; but I like the other business, because there's more life in it, and more moving around. I wouldn't care to be cooped up in a house all my life, chasing figures."

"The same spirit made me a detective," said Mr. McGinnis.

"How can you ask a director of the bank to appoint a young man who got dismissed from one bank and then ran away from home?" said Father Fleming.

"It is cheeky," replied Eddie; "but I thought *you* could recommend Harold, for *you* know how he has changed."

The gentlemen laughed, and Eddie knew that he had won his request. He went away with the assurance

that Harold would get the place, if the detective had any influence with his brother directors.

"A great boy, that," Mr. McGinnis said when the door closed on him.

"Well, see to it that he moves up quickly," said Father Fleming. "I want him right here while I'm in Fallville; for he's the best and strongest influence I have in dealing with the boys. He's a diamond."

CHAPTER XXII

AN ENEMY

SO Harold, dressed in his best, took his place once more among the financiers; and the home began to look like itself again, with that elegant youth coming and going in the most becoming clothes, ornamented with gems, and four-in-hand ties of the popular shade. When Vincent was strong enough to go about, Eddie insisted on a daily visit to the grocery where he labored and studied so patiently; and, sitting in a chair at the back, Vin could see what was done, study the customers, and in the intervals of trade chat with the proprietor. It was quite interesting, and the many details of the work showed that the grocery business was not to be despised.

Mr. Hurley was a middle-aged man, with too much fat on his body, but none in his brain. He had smiled so much in conducting his store that the smile remained night and day, sleeping or waking, and won him customers. He was really a kind, benevolent man, and he thought highly of the boy who did the outside work. For Eddie's was not too easy a job. He carried a basket often, wheeled a little wagon for the larger loads, and travelled many miles a day. Then he helped

to do up packages, kept the store clean and in order, and was the handy man about the place. Mr. Hurley declared him the steadiest, best boy in the whole town.

"Most boys," said Mr. Hurley to Vincent, "just do their work and run away. But Eddie works as if this store was his. He examines everything. He knows where everything comes from,—coffee and tea and sugar and canned salmon."

"If he weren't so slow," said a voice from the desk, to which the grocer did not pay any attention; but Vincent looked up at the speaker curiously. Formerly he would have taken fire at such a remark, and have hotly replied; but now he just turned the great blue eyes and pale face on the rude speaker, who returned his glance disdainfully.

Tom Benson knew why this boy had lost his foot and his fine position as secretary to a millionaire. He had heard it from Miss Sullivan, whom he visited so regularly that people began to smile and whisper about a coming marriage. Tom was a slender, sandy-haired youth of twenty-five, whose eyes were so pale a blue that at a distance he seemed to have none. He looked worn and sour, as if it were easier for him to eat pickles than cake. As the nephew of Mr. Hurley and his probable heir, he held the place of bookkeeper and general manager, bossed everybody, and made it so uncomfortable for most boys that they did not remain long in the employ of his benevolent uncle. The kind Mr. Hurley never noticed that his boys left chiefly on account of the rough ways of Tom. His nephew was always kind, obedient, polite and faithful to him, and the good man supposed he was the same to all the rest of mankind. Vincent measured him quietly, and saw that Eddie had his own cross to bear. Tom Benson would be trial enough for any saint or sinner whom he chose to rest on. He was content with Eddie, the

patient and uncomplaining, who never spoke of him, but made his upward climb as if such disagreeable creatures did not exist. Tom Benson had heard many complaints of Vincent from Miss Sullivan, who had not been as discreet in her criticism as she should have been; and his opinion of the maimed boy seemed to intimate that he had earned his affliction and well deserved it.

While the old man talked, Vincent studied the sandy haired nephew. Eddie came back with an empty basket, and Benson said coldly and curtly,

"Ten minutes late! Take out the wagon for the next load."

Eddie returned after a certain time with the empty wagon, and Benson said in the same disagreeable way,

"Fifteen minutes late! Flirting, I suppose, or reading the latest novel."

The clerk spoke his reproaches in a low tone with an indifferent air, as if talking about the weather, so that the proprietor did not catch what he was saying. He never missed a chance to fling an epithet, but the boy paid no more attention than to the sounds in the street. Watching Benson's face, Vincent saw in his pale eyes and curling lip the fire of hatred; so he said in a loud, clear voice, at a favorable moment:

"How do you like the work of Eddie Travers since he came here, Mr. Hurley?"

"The best boy that ever wore shoe leather," Mr. Hurley replied. "I would not lose him for twice what I pay him. I had boy after boy, but none of them were any good; couldn't depend on them. Strange how hard it is to get a good worker among boys."

"Don't you think," said Vincent, with great deliberation, "that it's the way a boy is handled that holds him to a job? Now, if a sour boss is forever

nagging at him, telling him he is no good, or always ten minutes late, or can't learn, isn't he sure to drop the job in the end?"

"Why shouldn't he?" said the grocer, with indignation. "Only a mule can stand nagging. But in this store I don't permit it."

Tom Benson turned a malignant glare on Vincent during these remarks, and almost snarled at the placid face which accused him so openly and boldly. A few minutes later Vincent found an opportunity to give Benson a warning.

"You heard what your uncle said. You treat Eddie Travers like a cur. You hate him. Now let up on it, or the right people shall be told some things about you that won't improve your position with them."

The face of Tom Benson turned so white at the rebuke that Vincent wondered, but he made no reply except to turn his back on the lad. While Vincent was indignant at his nagging of Eddie, he was also half joking in his hint that Miss Sullivan might hear of his conduct. But other thoughts were in Tom Benson's mind, and the threat shook his nerve to the foundation. Miss Sullivan had taught him to despise Eddie Travers as a poor creature, fitter for the slums than for decent company. She had talked in that way until Eddie had not only served her well, but had shown her his superior nature and something of her own deficiency. In her flippant, petulant way she had also given Vincent a poor standing, and so Tom Benson felt only contempt for the runaway and the pauper. From that moment, however, he never spoke to Vincent, and he ceased to vent his irritation on Eddie. People who live in glass houses can not afford to throw stones.

"Why do you stand him, Eddie?" was Vincent's

inquiry that night in the common room, after a recital of Benson's behavior.

"I *must* stand it," replied Eddie. "It doesn't hurt me. I *must* get on, and learn the business, and Mr. Hurley is good to me. If Tom Benson were not there, I should have too easy a time. He keeps me up to the mark, and he reminds me of what I must never be — a nagger. If he can stand it, I can."

"Why don't you complain to the boss?"

"He wouldn't believe it. He's fond of his nephew, and Tom is good to the old man. If one of us must go, I'm the one, and I mean to stay."

"Well, I think I put a spoke in his wheel for one day."

"You surely did," said Eddie; "for I noticed he never even looked my way after you left the store."

"Be careful just the same; for if looks could kill, we'd have had a funeral here long ago."

Vincent saw this silent hate many a time afterward in his visits to the store, but the nagging ceased. Tom Benson had selected other plans to get rid of Eddie Travers, and he had a fear that the watchful eyes of Vincent might discover them in time.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE STRUGGLE BEGINS

IT became very clear to Eddie that his enemy simply wished to get him out of the store, and that he had no particular dislike of him, except what rose from Eddie's firm determination not to leave the place because of his persecution. Benson's reasons for wishing to get rid of Eddie Travers were chiefly that he was a pauper, too patient and sensible to reply to

his fault-finding, and much superior to himself in honesty, truthfulness, and industry. In time he became jealous of the boy, and fearful lest his uncle should take a fancy to him and promote him. If a boy like Eddie — so honest, clear-headed, and courageous — ever entered the office, the secret career of Mr. Thomas Benson might be laid open to the public view. When Vincent spoke so boldly to him about exposure, he became certain that the errand boy of the store had detected some of his delinquencies. He had to discover what Eddie knew, and then to force him out of his position in such a way that no blame should attach to himself. He gave up open persecution, and began to lay plans for disgracing Eddie before his uncle. How it galled him to hear the boss praise the boy! And when one day Mr. Hurley, after discoursing on Eddie's merits, ordered his nephew to take him into the office secrets and routine, and prepare him for promotion later on, he flatly declined.

"I get on very well as I am," was his excuse; "and I can't stand that boy, with his slow ways."

"Well, I'll take him in hand myself," said the uncle. "I'm surprised that you do not like his work and his character, too."

"He puts on his best face to you, Uncle; but if you dealt with him as closely as I do, you would not be so anxious to promote him."

"I thought I dealt pretty closely with him," said the other, quite offended. "But since you say he has one face for you and another for me, I'm going to test him in person and you can look on. I'll have no hypocrites around this store."

He looked so directly at his nephew, even while he smiled, that Tom's heart fluttered. However, this was the opportunity for driving out Eddie Travers, and he laid his plans neatly and effectively. Although he was old-fashioned in his way of doing business, Mr.

Hurley kept a close watch on the administration. He left nothing but the office to his subordinates, studied them carefully, and was quite satisfied that every man did his duty fairly well. His admiration for Eddie received a severe check when Tom Benson declined to receive him into the office. His confidence in his own discernment also was shaken. If his nephew saw what he did not, then his powers must be failing, and he must be a very easy victim to the wiles of hypocrites.

Eddie opened the store at a certain hour every morning, and had everything ready for business by seven o'clock. To save time, he did his sweeping in the evening, staying a half hour later than the others; and then did the dusting in the morning. Mr. Hurley made a tour of inspection the next morning after his dispute with his nephew, and was shocked at what he saw. The open places had been carefully swept, but the secret places were simply filthy, although he had instructed the boy carefully on this point. He made no complaint, because Tom had suggested that he observe in silence until he had a list of the lad's failures. The second morning he himself arrived at the store before the usual hour, just to see if Eddie was on time.

Now, that morning a curious and unlooked-for thing had happened to Eddie. On the way down to the store one of the young toughs, whom the Lookaheads had beaten into shape and into order in the battle over the Sand Bar, encountered him as if by accident, recited his woes and his feelings in a loud voice, and demanded instant satisfaction. In vain Eddie requested a more convenient time for a meeting on the field of honor. Finally, seeing that time was wasted in discussion, he demolished his adversary and went his way. Encounters in the early morning became so frequent that Eddie had at last to arrange with the

Lookaheads to accompany him to the store and to take care of the "bushwhackers" on the way. By that time he understood who set them on, but he did not dream how far his enemy had carried his schemes.

Mr. Hurley had witnessed one of these encounters, and regretted Eddie's ability and skill in a fight. The dirty store, the rowdyism in the streets, and the late arrival, were quite enough to prove his nephew's contention. But more than that appeared. Tom Benson showed him how little articles vanished from the shelves,—such things as a boy would like and a man would not care for. He drew papers of dubious character out of Eddie's overcoat pockets, along with cigarettes and other objectionable things. In fact, he kept up such a fire on the boy's good character that Mr. Hurley dropped the project of promoting him. He knew now that it would be only a question of time when Eddie would go like the others, and he began to wonder if there was really a boy worth while in the whole town.

Eddie had opened his eyes to the real character of Tom Benson only when he had to fight his old enemies. He had seen the dirt in the corners, and missed the little articles, and had wondered at the smell of cigarettes in his clothes. But these incidents happened only once, and he did not connect them with himself in any way. But when the Lookaheads had to turn out to fight the various toughs who waylaid him of mornings, he began to speculate on the nature of Tom Benson. Mr. Hurley had grown distant with him of late, but still wore his old smile. All at once the truth flashed on him. The nephew was filling the uncle with lies about him. What better explanation for the queer things happening? But could any human being, in particular a Catholic, who went to church once in a while, be guilty of such villainy? It seemed impossible, yet a little watching showed him that Tom

Benson had enough of evil in him to injure a rival. A sharp inquiry proved that he had paid the boys who had attacked him in the streets of mornings; had hired them to take a thrashing just to delay Eddie on his way to the store. Very likely the uncle had seen the fights, had noticed the foreign dirt scattered around the store, and had been told that Eddie was a thief. There was no time to be lost. The night of his discovery of the facts he faced Tom Benson in the office, after the others had gone home.

"Well?" said the young man, sneeringly.

"I've 'licked' all the kids you hired to fight me last week," said Eddie, "and the Lookaheads are going to take care of the rest. I've swept up the dirt you scattered behind the boxes in this store, and I've kept track of the things which left the shelves so's you could tell your uncle some one stole them. Now, before I go to the police with all this, I want to know when you're going to stop your dirty work against me."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Tom Benson, savagely; "and I want you to get right out of this office, or I'll throw you out."

"Do you want me to talk to your uncle about it to-morrow, and have him hear my side?" said Eddie. "If you don't, just answer my question. When is this lying and stealing and fighting going to stop?"

"When you are out of this place for good," replied Tom, eating his own words easily; for he did not wish the affair brought before his uncle, whose honest inquiry would surely discover the facts.

"You couldn't drive me out before," Eddie said tauntingly, "so now you are going to make me out a thief and everything that's bad. Do you think I'll go, with your lies behind me? Not on your life, Tom Benson! I've got friends, and I've got as good a character as you have."

"You, the pauper!" sneered the other.

"And what are you? You think no one knows where you spend your holidays and what you do with your money. You are trying to tell your uncle lies about me to get me out of here, and all I have to do is to tell him the truth about you; and you would be 'fired' as far as China. Now, who's got the better chance to stay here another year? I don't care to stay, but I'm *going* to stay; and the day that I leave, you leave, smarty gambler!"

Tom Benson sat like a statue, numb and terrified, before this denunciation. He was like a half-dead soldier in charge of a battery, who sees his guns spiked without being able to lift a hand in defence.

Eddie left him with the last threat, because he did not care to talk with him more, and he feared that Benson in his rage might add another fight to the combats of the past fortnight. He was himself astonished at the effect of his charges on the man. He turned pale as a corpse, and his eyes shot fire at Eddie, but he could not utter a word. He knew when he was beaten, but he knew also that a very different scheme would be required to overcome this steady-nerved boy.

Later Eddie decided to leave the store and find another position, although he could not very well leave while under a cloud with Mr. Hurley. Then he felt a great pity for the man who had been kind to him, and who would no doubt be deceived to the end by his wily and dissipated nephew. It was a matter for Father Fleming to decide, and he laid the details before him at their next meeting. The priest enjoyed the boy's way of discussing and settling the grave problems of boy life.

"How did you find out all this?"

"Just by going around and keeping my eyes open," Eddie answered. "When these chaps want to go bad, they start a club like ours and call it by a nice

name. They think everybody is fooled; but when a crowd gets going to a certain house night and day, and the blinds are closed, and they get drunk now and then, people know it's not a liter'y club."

"Pronounce it *literary*," said Father Fleming,—
"no, I should say not. What's Benson's club?"

"The Shelley *Literary* Association, and they have a bust of a great man just inside the door," and Eddie had to laugh. "One night I saw a silk hat on the bust, tipped over the left eye. That's what they think of Shelley, whoever he was."

"Card gambling, I suppose?"

"In the club, yes. But Tom Benson plays the ponies, and drops more money than he makes; for he's not a winner."

"Where does he get the money?"

"That's the question, Father."

"So you think of leaving Hurley's?"

"Well, if you think it best, Father."

"What do you think of it yourself?"

"It isn't worth while fighting Tom Benson, because he'll do any mean thing against me. I should go. Then I get thinking of Mr. Hurley; he was very kind, you know, to the 'pauper,' and I don't feel like leaving him alone with Tom. But of course it's none of my business."

"Isn't he able to take care of himself?"

"He is, and yet Tom is fooling him about me, and perhaps about other things. If I stayed Mr. Hurley would have to know that I am innocent. Then who knows when or how the thing would break out again?"

"Quite right," said Father Fleming; "and yet you must stay in the store, either to save or to down Tom Benson. If you can save him, so much the better; if you can not, then you must save Mr. Hurley from him. You're not called on to do so much, but it

seems to me that evil can be hindered by keeping on as usual."

"It's just the way I looked at it," said Eddie, "but at the same time Mr. Hurley might thank me to clear out, and Tom might land me in jail."

"Well, you have bail enough ready, from Mr. McGinnis and me."

"Then I'll stay and do my best."

"And I'll speak a private word to Tom Benson, just to let him know that we are watching his career and looking for his literary productions. Now, then, what have we got to look ahead for at the next meeting of the club?"

Eddie was surprised at the suddenness with which the priest dismissed the Benson subject, because usually he went over the same ground many times to guard against error; but he did not seem to attach much importance to Tom Benson and his behavior, particularly when the Lookaheads came up as topic.

"The next thing to look ahead for," said Eddie, "is the career of the right honorable Vincent Radley, after he gets his artificial foot. He has not said anything about it, because he is not thinking of it. But I think we should take it up, so as to encourage him, and set him to thinking."

"Until he talks about it himself, there will hardly be any need for us to talk about it. He is very stubborn, you know."

"Not the present Vin," said Eddie. "This is a new one. All the bad in him was in that foot which the train cut off. The new Vin deserves the best job that we can find for him."

"I see you have already been thinking about it," said Father Fleming.

"And I have an idea, but I'm almost ashamed to tell it: the same place for the new boy — secretary to Mr. Willard."

"A dream," said the priest, shaking his head, "and impossible."

"Some dreams come true. We can wait and we can try. I have a plan, and I'm going to try it, just for fun. Vin dreams of that position. I heard him in his sleep. It would almost make up for his lost foot to get the old job back. Will you help, Father?"

"As the director of the club, I can not refuse."

Eddie went home from the momentous interview with a light heart. He could see so far ahead, and think of so much happiness, that the world seemed very pleasant in spite of the schemes and the sins of Tom Benson.

CHAPTER XXIV

ONE WAY TO PAY DEBTS

HAROLD came home one day from the bank and proceeded to try the effect of a new tie, of a pale heliotrope color, which had just come out. Vin watched him trying it on, and taking various poses before the glass in order to get the full effect of the tie as it might appear to the eyes of admirers.

"What do you think of it?" said he with pride.

"I was just thinking," Vin replied from his easy-chair, where he heard part of the question, "that we should do some thinking for Eddie, and not leave him to do all for us."

"Quite right! But this tie now?"

"Bother the tie! Has it occurred to you that we have accepted all Ed's favors without doing more than thanking him?"

"It has, so I bought him two ties like my own; and I mean to have him share in everything I get for myself after this."

"That's easy. But now we must do a little more," persisted Vin. "We must bother that Tom Benson some. He must make life awful for the boy every day; and we should do a little, in a nice, kind way, to make life occasionally awful for him."

"Right you are, my honey boy! Say what."

"To-night, in the parlor, we must entertain Mr. McGinnis for two hours or longer, if necessary. Ed-die or mother must get him here quick."

Harold patted his chum on the head and danced about in glee.

"But say not a word to any one of the intention," he cautioned Vin.

"Not a word. You do the engineering, and we'll all make it pleasant for the pale-eyed young man."

So Vincent wrote a special note to the genial gardener, asking him to take tea with the family that evening, and to lighten the long hours for a poor invalid with stories from his own life. McGinnis replied promptly that nothing would please him better; and that he would have called before, only his presence might remind the patient too keenly of his misfortune; "for I am like an undertaker," wrote the detective, "who can not visit even his sick friends for fear of shock to them and misinterpretation from the world."

"My, but that's a word!" said Vincent, as he read the note to his mother. "Is Mr. McGinnis an educated man?"

"Well, that's the letter of a man with education," said Mrs. Radley; "and he has given us so many surprises that no one need be shocked if he is a D. D. from a university. He is a gardener, a detective, and a bank director, though he looks like a harmless creature without a cent."

"Is he old?" said Vincent.

"I put him down at forty, but Father Fleming

tells me he is not more than thirty-six, though he has seen enough of the world to be seventy. One thing we can never forget — his service to you. So I am glad you have invited him specially; and you must keep on inviting him, since we have no other way to show our regard."

Now, if the detective had surprised the boys in all their dealings with him, he surprised them again that evening. Always laughing, with a jolly round face, seemingly as innocent as a child or a rustic, making light of everything, he came to tea as serious, decorous and quiet as an alderman. Miss Sullivan had never seen him before, and had formed her ideas of his appearance from the chatter of the boys. She was rather taken aback at the sight of a gentleman in correct evening dress, of easy and proper manner, evidently as much at home in the drawing-room as in the garden of the Sand Bar or the offices of bankers and lawyers. Eddie was left in blank amazement at the change, until he recalled that Mr. McGinnis in his time had been compelled to play many parts,— that he had been a sailor, a tramp, an old man, a stevedore, an engineer, a farmer, and whatever was necessary to the work in hand; and that he had to play his part perfectly, because life and other important things so often depended on his success.

The three lads had a hard time to keep straight faces on the occasion. Miss Sullivan became all at once interested in the visitor; and the party forgot, as they sat in the parlor after tea, that this night belonged by prescription to the unamiable and cruel Mr. Benson. As he entered and greeted the assembly, his face looked like wood, hardened a trifle more at sight of Eddie, and still more at the cool greeting of the detective. Eddie would have left the room immediately, but he was pocketed between his chums, who refused their consent. Mrs. Radley would in time have ar-

ranged their exit in her tactful way, but all the others blocked her efforts. When Mr. McGinnis made a move, the younger lady demanded another story. The three boys sat in such a fashion that their eyes could be directed like the guns of a battery on the nervous and angry enemy. They asked especially for stories dealing with the capture of gamblers, and looked as innocent as babies while they were telling. Like every suitor, Tom Benson hoped to the last for the departure of the visitor and the members of the household; and the event would have happened decently but for the interference of Harold.

"Now that Mr. McGinnis has entertained us with stories of real life," said he to his sister, "it's only fair that you should return the favor by singing."

And Miss Sullivan sang very prettily, and the boys sang, and the hostess invited Mr. Benson to sing — an invitation which the boys blocked by keeping up their own ditties; and thus the evening passed pleasantly to all but Mr. Benson, who learned for the first time that the pauper had the love and esteem and guardianship of these people, and that to injure him meant to offend the lady of his fancy and the terrible detective. He took his punishment with good grace, so far as one could see; but in his heart he spoke fearful imprecations against the lame boy, who had already threatened him, and now scorned him.

Mrs. Radley and her niece could not understand the loud laughter from the common room that night when the boys were going to bed. Eddie alone objected to the sweating process inflicted on his enemy.

"We have no business to interfere with a fellow courting," he said.

"'Twasn't we: 'twas Mr. McGinnis," Vincent mimicked.

"Then I'll have to stand Tom Benson the rest of the week, and he can get even with me easily."

“Don’t worry, my boy; for, now that he sees where you stand with the charming Miss Sullivan, he will be slow to do anything against you.”

Which was perfectly true, and all next day Eddie could see and feel the restraint which Tom Benson put upon himself in order to avoid offending a favorite of the lady for whom his corrupt heart often sighed. Eddie thought it a good sign that so disagreeable a man had an affection for his uncle and other persons; but he would have preferred a man like Mr. McGinnis as a husband for a woman whom he respected. However, Tom Benson was not yet lost, and, with the grace of God, might turn out a decent fellow in the end.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FALSE FOOT

THE winter passed and the spring returned,—a fact well known to Cataract Street by the roar of the Falls night and day. The snows of the Adirondacks melted and sent a tremendous volume of water over the precipice. All the old landmarks had gone,—the Sand Bar above and the Big Rock below. For weeks the rapids would be visible between the dam and the Falls,—one mass of swirling, racing waters. A mist fell into the street when the east wind came,—the mist of the cataract.

Vincent watched it for hours from the windows of his room. It was always the same. In summer only a thread of water streamed through the main channel; in the wet seasons it was like Niagara. So it had been for ages. Only men change—foolish men,—and he looked at the place where his foot should have been. He had lost it playing the fool. Oh,

how bitter his heart grew at the loss and the folly! But in the long days at the hospital, when his temper had changed so wonderfully, he had resolved never to speak of his affliction in grief, but always with good humor. His grief and bitterness he kept to himself from that moment, offering it to God as a little penance for his sins. But his sensitive nature felt the weakness and the humiliation. He would never again be like other men. And down he went into the bluest depths of sadness, which he told his mother was simple weariness and had to be slept off. One can not deceive a loving mother, and she was not deceived; but she made no sign and did not attempt to comfort him.

There came that day when the doctor thought the artificial foot could be used. Mrs. Radley dreaded the hour, which was bound to renew the anguish of the first terrible days in the hospital. Her boy shrank from allusions to his accident, except with Father Fleming: he never spoke of the artificial foot that must come. She left the whole matter to Eddie and Harold, to whom the artificial foot was an affair of intense interest. They did not understand Vincent's feelings at all; but the poor woman thought that the boys, in their rough way, would arrange the affair much better than she could. Long confinement had affected the health of the growing boy. It was necessary, the doctor said, that he should begin walking again as soon as possible, and he gave Mrs. Radley a description of the artificial foot which had to be bought and which Vincent must learn to use. Harold and Eddie accompanied her to the shop where such things are fashioned, and their information enabled the man in charge to make a good guess at what was wanted. He would prepare the foot and go to the house himself to attach it, and to show the patient how it was to be worn.

The boys felt that they had great news for Vincent after these matters had been settled.

"What do you think?" they said in unison, with their fingers in the air, in imitation of an important personage. "Something is going to happen to you,—something expensive, beautiful, wonderful. What do you think?"

"I can't think with two ducks wig-wagging at me."

"You are to have your false foot in three days."

"Which means that you are to be on your feet again," said Harold, the wit. He laughed so loud at his own sparkle that only Eddie noticed the cripple choking back the sobs and tears which rose in him, yet Eddie did not quite understand.

"We saw the model of it, we chose the shape and size," said he eagerly. "It is a wonderful thing how they make false feet."

"False foots!" Harold screamed, so that Vincent had to laugh.

"Of course it will take some time for you to learn to use it."

"I guess you'll feel as if you were carrying five pounds of iron at the end of the leg; but the man said one gets so used to it that when it is taken off at night one feels its absence just like a real foot."

"A real foot!" Eddie cried in turn.

"One on me; but really, Vin, it's great. You'll have to get two socks just the same as before, and two shoes, but you won't have to fuss with the false one."

"And you must be careful," said Eddie, "never to make a kick at anything with *that* foot."

They thought they were making it pleasant for the unfortunate boy, who sat grinning at their rude wit, growing whiter and whiter with wild anguish and rising anger against everything; but he held himself in

until they turned away to their own rooms and bed. He sat listening to Harold's preparations, which included the careful putting away of ties and jewelry; and also to Eddie's swift disposal of his simple garments, for which he cared little. And then Vincent wept bitterly, out of a heart so full of long sadness that his tears came in a flood. Eddie heard him and knew not what to do, but he understood. It was easy for them, with all their limbs, to chatter about false feet; but to one who lacked a foot, such chatter was simply awful. There was nothing to be done but let him cry his grief out and get his comfort direct from God. So Eddie waited a long time, and then pretended to wake with a start, and cried out indignantly:

"Aren't you in bed yet?"

So that gave him a chance to jump up and to help his chum to his own room, where he sat chatting another half hour, until, somewhat cheered, the poor lad began to waver in his speech and then dropped off into sleep.

Eddie sat for another minute looking at the pale, sad, beautiful face, with its crown of bright hair, its stubborn mouth and obstinate nose; and he thought how little we know of one another, how easy it is to hurt the unhappy, and how much men suffer without speaking of it. This boy would suffer like this forever; and many would fling his misfortune in his face with joy because it hurt, just as they flung his poverty at himself. Well, Vincent had one sure friend who would never willingly in word or deed add to his affliction.

The ordeal of fitting the artificial foot came and went. The maker and the three boys settled the affair among themselves; and the professional made it so interesting by his own interest in securing success,

that the sufferer almost forgot his woe. Eddie wisely made a mystery out of it.

"No telling about this," said he, "until you can manage it all right. Then you'll march out with Harold's prettiest cane between your fingers, and give the world a surprise. We'll practise you."

"You will have to carry a cane," the maker said, "because for some time there will be a little uncertainty in your use of the foot, and you might easily make a misstep and injure the mechanism."

What a delight to his mother and cousin when he began to walk about the house naturally, and the crutch was laid aside! At first he went out at nights with the boys and walked up and down the street slowly. Such joy he had from that freedom of movement! He forgot to pity himself, seeing that he would soon be able to control the artificial foot as well as ever he did the natural one. Finally the hour came when he could depend on his skill sufficiently to walk anywhere.

"Where shall we go first?" said he.

"To the Sand Bar," replied Eddie.

"Or to visit Mr. McGinnis," suggested Harold.

"Both in time, of course," said Vincent; "but to-day the first long walk must be to one place only. Come along."

They wondered, but the place he had chosen was the church, where he knelt to thank God for his escape and his mother's from sorrow and death. Father Fleming had a beautiful church, and the great concave wall of the sanctuary was alive with glorious paintings showing forth the glory of the Risen Christ. Vincent studied them long while he prayed, and he whispered to his companions as they rose to go:

"I have been dead and I am alive again."

CHAPTER XXVI

SOME CHANGES

WHATEVER Father Fleming said to Tom Benson, the change in his relations toward Eddie was marked. There were no more reproaches, no sneers, no fiery looks; only a stiff, cold manner, with which no one could find fault. Tom now knew that he could not persecute a boy with such friends as stood behind Eddie Travers. And the priest had also spoken to Mr. Hurley with such meaning that the proprietor of the grocery store took the lad again into his favor, and began to talk office promotion to him.

"Do you think you could make good in the office?" asked Mr. Hurley. "Do you know anything about bookkeeping and penmanship and commercial arithmetic?"

"All that the books can teach," said Eddie; "but of course that's a different thing from the real work at the desk."

"All that the books can teach," Mr. Hurley repeated. "And where did you learn all that the books can teach?"

"At home and in school, with a lift from Father Fleming now and then."

"He told me something about that, and said you had done very well. But now let me test you. Write a letter ordering a lot of goods, and ask the shippers to be quicker than the last time. They were mighty slow with those canned goods, you know."

In a few minutes Eddie placed the letter in the hands of the old gentleman, who read it with pleasure and astonishment. He could not have done half so well himself with such a letter. The writing looked

as if it had been taken straight from the copy-book, only better; for it had life and character in it. The form of the letter was good, the language correct, and the calculations on prices accurate.

"You must have practised a great deal to learn this," said Mr. Hurley.

"Ever since I got the chance," Eddie replied.

"Now about the bookkeeping? How long have you practised that?"

"Ever since I came here, sir. I knew the chance would come some day to get into the office and learn the inside of the business, so I got ready away ahead."

"You are a boy like those I knew fifty years ago," and Mr. Hurley patted his shoulder. "They always thought about getting ready for what was ahead of them. Nowadays it seems to be shows and dances and parties and baseball with the young people, and never mind what's ahead of you till you come to it."

"That's why Father Fleming started the Lookahead Club, sir,—to teach the boys how to get ready for what's ahead."

"Well, he had a good recruit in you, Eddie; and I'm glad of it. You will go into the office Monday, and I'll get another boy for the outside work."

"Thank you, sir!" said Eddie, with flushed cheek and shining eyes, as he went about his work again, so happy that he could hardly speak or even think. He was done with the Kindergarten, as he called the basket and the little wagon; and done with the sweeping and dusting and packing and delivering goods.

Mr. Hurley, looking at him over his spectacles, suddenly noticed that Eddie was no longer a boy but a young man, in size, in experience, and in thoughtfulness. He had been in the store two years, and was now in his seventeenth year. Never had there been in his employ a boy more patient, even-tempered, industrious or intelligent. He had studied every possible

detail of the business. In some matters he knew more about it than Mr. Hurley himself. He was now tall, well built, and manlike in his ways, looking out at the world from a pale face, with melancholy dark eyes and sensitive mouth, which expressed only part of his nature. He was a cheerful, fun-loving boy; but in his quiet moments the tragedy of his life — the loss of his parents and relatives, and his career in orphan asylums — took first place in his mind, and gave him an expression of sadness. He was not sad, however, but happy and hopeful. He had won his promotion; and even the fact that he had to work side by side with Tom Benson did not dash his joy. He could stand greater hardship than that; and, anyway, Father Fleming had muzzled the vicious creature.

Eddie did not venture to tell the household of his good fortune, simply because they would have made such a noise over it. Harold and Vincent would have insisted on dressing him up in the latest style, with a fine tie, a pin stuck in it, and other "dandified nonsense," which did not suit a grocery-store. Tom Benson nodded to him as he entered the office for the first time, and gave him his share in the keeping of the books, without any further explanation than was required for the particular work. Tom knew what he had to contend with. In a month Eddie Travers would know every book demanded by the business, and would have the scheme at his finger ends. Tom had provided against that. He had formed a new scheme, and could keep the old and the real one for himself. Eddie would never get at the secrets of the firm and its business. What did it matter to Eddie, so long as he was happy?

But now strange things began to happen at home. The sweet days of June were half gone; the Sand Bar was in perfect order for the swimming season; the Lookaheads had begun to knock fire from their heels

because school was ending, when the announcement of a marriage startled the boys and made the common room buzz with astonished conversation. Mrs. Radley made it in her quiet, sweet way, just saying that they might have noticed the visits of Mr. McGinnis to the house; that his attentions were not entirely directed to Vincent, but had included Miss Sullivan, and that a few months of acquaintance had assured the lady and the detective of their mutual regard and love. They were going to be married.

Such a storm as arose on the spot! The boys congratulated Harold in mock style; then they whistled the "Wedding March" and led him up an imaginary aisle to an imaginary altar. And the wedding was to take place in two weeks or so; then the bridal pair were to go to Europe on a wedding tour. After returning home, Mr. and Mrs. McGinnis would live at the house near the Sand Bar.

Before the rejoicings were over, Eddie saw some things that were not mentioned in the program. What a time he would have with Tom Benson when the news of the engagement went abroad! The disappointed man would lay all the blame on him. Then the little home would lose Miss Sullivan, and the joy of the common room would be diminished. The home air had not revived the strength of Vincent as quickly as the doctor wished, and his mother had begun to talk of going to the mountains. In that case Eddie would be quite alone. Of course he would have Father Fleming at hand to cheer and console him by his mere presence. Yet he could not help thinking how changeable life is, and how hard it is to hold happiness for a long time. He said as much to Father Fleming one day.

"But you will get used to it," said the priest; "in fact, you *are* used to it; for what has your life been but change? You are just beginning to notice it,—

that's all. All you have to do is to make the most of what's nearest, and leave to God the joy that's lost and the joy that's to come. We get on somehow. Which reminds me that I'm feeling none too well myself, and that I've made all my plans for six months in Europe."

"I'll be left alone, sure enough," said Eddie.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FIRST TRICK

EDDIE did not see all the consequences of the changes taking place at home, and did not understand what being alone would mean to him. He consoled himself by thinking of everybody's return, and of the joys of the coming winter, when Mr. McGinnis would be keeping open house at the Sand Bar, and the common room would be gay again. Yet the changes, in spite of the excitement and fun, proved rather sad, just because they were changes.

The wedding was quiet but gay; and, to Eddie's delight, his detective friend looked the part he was playing,—that is, he looked like the director of a bank getting married to a fine girl, in the most fashionable way.

After the wedding festivities were over and the bridal pair had gone to Europe, then the packing began for Vin's stay in the mountains. The lads made fun over it, but their hearts were very heavy in saying good-bye. When Eddie locked the last door of the vacant house, something clicked in his throat like the click of the key turning in the lock. He was again without a home. And he felt himself also without a friend when, a few days later, he escorted Father

Fleming to the train which took him to New York and the European steamer. Harold and he turned to their boarding-house with the feeling of orphans. There was something on Harold's mind, and he spoke of it as they sat together in their room that night before going to bed.

"You've been an orphan all your life, Ed, haven't you?" said he.

The other nodded.

"Terrible feeling," continued Harold. "I never felt it before; but, now that my sister belongs to somebody else, I seem to feel it for the first time."

"But you have two homes now," said Eddie, "with your aunt and your brother-in-law. You have a claim in both places; I have none."

"Well, if I have I don't intend to take it. Like you, I have learned something from change, and I have also learned to look ahead. I'm not going to stay in Fallville."

Eddie stared at him in astonishment and grief.

"You, too?" he exclaimed.

"Me, too, honey boy! From the day my sister announced her marriage, I began to think it over. I'm going to New York. I have the bank training. I can get a good letter from the officials here. I'm going into the business like a man, and get the best place a man can win in the big city. There's no chance here for a rise. Now don't think you can persuade me to stay, for you can't. I'm going as soon as I can leave decently."

"Where are you going?" said Eddie, with high scorn. "You talk about looking ahead like me. Is that looking ahead, to go into a big city, without an acquaintance, to get work? Where will you go in New York?"

"Oh, I can fix all that!" said Harold easily, picking a thread off his coat and placing it with great care on

Eddie's. "Grocers don't mind such little things;" and he grinned. "Indeed, I may say that I *have* fixed all that."

"How, I'd like to know?" inquired Edward, as severe as a judge.

"This way," said Harold. "I know a very powerful man in the great city who has only to say to this bank or that, 'Here is a man I want placed,' and the said man is placed. I know another man who is very powerful with this powerful man. I shall say to the second man, 'Give me a letter to the first man.' I get it, present it, get the place, and the job is done."

"But who are these two powers?" Eddie said. "England and Russia? Or Mr. Barnum and Mr. Forepaugh?"

"Greater than they, my boy,—greater than they," said Harold grandly. "Ah, see what it is to have and to keep such friends and acquaintances! In my early youth I learned to know and to love them, and now it is my proud privilege to use them."

"But who are they?"

"The Honorable James E. Sullivan and the no less honorable Edward Travers. Am I correct?"

"You are, and I am fooled," said Eddie. "You certainly are right, Mr. Harold Sullivan, though you have me surprised all round. But what will your sister say to this?"

"Whatever she feels like saying she must say in Europe. It will be too late to say it to me. She agrees with me in everything. Now I have fixed matters. I am through with our bank, and I have a fine letter. Saturday is the Fourth, the nation's birthday. We shall go down to New York together on the boat Friday night,—excursion rates,—my expense. We shall celebrate the day in Central Park. We shall locate the head of all the Sullivans, call on him Sunday, get his letter on the strength of my letter,

your presence, and the Lookaheads; and you may return home Sunday night by boat."

In vain Eddie offered a list of objections to the scheme. They came from his heart, not from his head; for he felt utterly cast down at the loss of his companion so soon after the closing of the home.

So the two chums went down to the big city together, carried out the program to the letter, and had the time of their lives with the handsome head of the Sullivan clan. He made much of them, drove them around the Park, agreed to place Harold that week, and wanted Eddie to take a place with himself in his own office. But he respected his wish to peg away at the grocery business; and requested him as a favor to let him know when he was ready to start business on his own account, as he felt sure he could help him; and he was most anxious to assist the boys of Father Fleming's club in every way possible. He would have kept them all night at his fine house (and Harold accepted his invitation to remain until he found a home), but that Eddie had to take the boat up the river. So, thanking the kindly man, they went their way.

Eddie wrung Harold's hand swiftly and got aboard to make the loneliest journey of his young life. He prayed that night never to have such another so long as he lived. The little home where he had been so happy had vanished as in fairyland. He was utterly alone in the world, far from his friends.

Eddie Travers was so depressed, so wrapped up in the thought of the absent, that he entered the office next morning like one in a dream. With a start he saw Tom Benson in his accustomed place, and for a moment stood looking at him and thinking. What a chance Benson had to injure him, if he were of the same mind as last year! The ocean separated him from the detective and the priest. He had not a strong friend in the town.

"All your friends have left town," said Tom lightly, as if it were a pleasant matter. "Why didn't you go with them?"

"I didn't have to," was the short reply.

"It might have saved you some trouble," Benson went on. "The 'boss' spent two days going over the books while you were away. He found something wrong."

"Well, *you* can tell him how it came there. I'm not worrying."

"Something wrong!" repeated Benson with great enjoyment, as if he were singing the phrase, which he kept up all day long, now to one tune and again to another, until, between the man's hate and his own grief, Eddie felt that his head and his heart were breaking together.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A CONSTANT FRIEND

IN the afternoon Mr. Hurley entered the office with a serious expression. His smile had vanished. Eddie Travers now recalled that the smile had been absent for more than a week, and that he had wondered if the old gentleman were falling into any illness; in the excitement of the wedding and the family break-up, he had forgotten the fact. Tom Benson looked at his uncle calmly, for he had nothing to fear; and then he looked at his assistant, whom he had been nagging all day about this coming scene. But the lad was as indifferent as an honest boy should be.

Mr. Hurley cleared his throat as he asked the attention of his bookkeepers.

"There is an error in your books, Eddie," said he kindly; "and it conceals a loss of fifty dollars to the firm. I don't so much mind the error, because such

things will happen. It's the fact that it looks as if it was done intentionally, in order to hide the theft of fifty dollars."

"I examined my books," Eddie replied, "and could find nothing wrong. Mr. Benson said there was, but I could see no error."

"Well, then, let us both look the books over together," said Mr. Hurley.

He pointed out the account and showed how it had been covered up. The writing and the figures were certainly Eddie's, as he had to acknowledge; but the transaction he could not recall.

"What have you to say to that?" Mr. Hurley asked.

"Nothing, because I can't remember that business," the boy replied.

"Well, I am willing to overlook it this time, with a warning that it must never happen again, but on the condition that you pay back the lost money."

"As I didn't take any money, and never intended to play the thief, I'm not going to return any," said Eddie, with spirit. "I don't see, either, how you can afford to overlook the matter. A thief is a thief and should be exposed."

And he looked into the sneering face of Benson, who was enjoying the scene.

"I am willing to overlook it," said Mr. Hurley, "because Father Fleming is your backer, and recommended you to me highly; also because temptation comes to any one, and any one may fall under it. But if one rises again, repairs the fault, and promises reform, it is only fair that he should have another chance."

"Father Fleming has never backed or recommended a thief," Eddie answered, in the same spirited way. "If I took this money, I am a thief, and not fit to be here, or to be backed by Father Fleming. If I stole the money and 'doctored' the books, it means that I in-

tend to steal again. There is only one thing to do with such a thief: expose him, dismiss him, and put him in his proper place."

He spoke these strong words with his eyes fixed on Tom Benson, who still smiled and sneered, but at the same time became conscious that in this attitude of Eddie's there was danger also for himself. So he spoke up loudly:

"Take him at his word, Uncle Patrick, and let him go with the mark of the thief on him. That will end the trouble and the stealing."

"But it *won't* end either the trouble or the stealing," said Eddie. "You won't find the thief by sacking me, and you won't stop the stealing. And the trouble won't end either, because when I leave this store I must leave with the best letter of recommendation Mr. Hurley ever wrote. I earned it, and if he doesn't give it the right people will make him."

"Tra-la-la! what have we here?" Tom said haughtily. "You talk of letters and character after stealing fifty dollars —"

"Tut, tut, tut!" Mr. Hurley interposed. "No one has accused Eddie of stealing. How often, when I kept my own books, I made errors — took my own money from myself, and gave it back to myself, and the transaction never showed up in the books! What I meant all along was that fifty dollars seems to have gone and that Eddie fixed his books to account for it. It is only fair that the man who makes an error should pay for it; and, in returning the fifty dollars, Eddie is not to be considered a thief returning stolen goods, but simply a blundering bookkeeper who keeps his balance correct at his own expense."

Somehow, this did not tally with the first remarks of the old gentleman; but he would listen to no discussion of the affair, assured Eddie of his confidence,

and left the office. For the sake of delay, so as to get time for defence, Eddie accepted the arrangement, and took up his work again. Tom Benson did likewise, but in a state of alarm. He had watched his uncle closely, and did not like the manner in which he had acted. There seemed to be something hidden in his words and actions. He had shown no feeling, and had backed down from his first charge without any shame. In fact, Tom got so uneasy that he determined to get rid of Eddie, somehow or other, within twenty-four hours. He grew calmer when he recalled that Eddie's friends were all scattered so far as to be of no assistance. He could almost do as he pleased with him.

And poor Eddie had the same feeling. He sat in his little room in the boarding-house after tea, the loneliest boy in the world. It seemed that he had been stripped in one month of everything he owned: his pretty home, his dear friends and chums, his defenders and protectors, the priest and the detective, his position and his reputation. It was like a shipwreck. God had given him these precious gifts, and now He had permitted them to be taken away. Oh, what loneliness filled his heart! The Radleys would return, the genial McGinnis and the kind Father Fleming would return, but his place and his character would not return, unless he could find a way to beat Tom Benson at his own game. But of what use was it to fight so malignant an enemy,—one who would keep up his villainy? Why not follow his friends into exile,—go to some distant town, and leave this fiend to his own devices?

In his despondency, Eddie considered the matter seriously, until he remembered that Father Fleming had advised him to stick to his post, and either defeat or save Tom Benson. He had accepted the advice,

and indeed had given his word, and he would not go back on his word without the gravest reason. He could not forget Father Fleming, or overlook his lightest wish, for all the sadness that misfortune could heap on him. No, he must not fly: he must stay at his post; he must fight the thing to a finish.

So he rose up and went out onto the street, into the soft summer night, to breathe the fresh air and to think the matter over. He wandered up to the vacant house, and tears streamed down his cheeks as he stood at the door and thought of the dear hearts so far away. He wandered down to Partridge's lot, where the Lookaheads assembled for the regular chase of Wawayanda, and stood staring at the Falls, ghostly in the moonlight. They were quiet to-night, because little water poured over the precipice. He stood on the very spot from which the poet, Thomas Moore, had looked and taken his inspiration for his fine verses. All these years, and long centuries back, God had directed the flow of the wild waters, guiding them in their confines to the sea. And if He guided the river in its course, surely He guided poor souls like himself, without a friend at hand to help and save.

He then wandered down to the beautiful church, which Father Fleming had made so splendid with ornamentation. He knelt at the gate of the sanctuary, under the light of the ever-burning lamp, because the feet of the good priest had gone in and out of that gate so often on his errands of mercy. Every spot seemed to breathe his name: the altar, the pulpit, the bench, the confessional. Ah, what a friend to have loved and owned! But he was gone, with all the others; and the orphan and the pauper was alone, naked to his enemy, shadowed by disgrace! Then he looked at the Tabernacle, and, instead of weeping from lonesomeness, he smiled with confidence and joy. Here was the Friend, not to be removed by death or anything; al-

ways close at hand, night and day; always strong and always loving! He joined his hands and raised them to the Tabernacle, and prayed fervently.

CHAPTER XXIX

TEMPTATION

THE next day passed quietly in the office. Tom Benson was very thoughtful, and Mr. Hurley had not resumed his everlasting smile, although he talked pleasantly when necessary. Eddie felt that he was under a cloud, but he could not see his way out. Something was bound to happen sooner or later. He made up his mind that it must be later, and that he would hold on if possible until his friends returned. He knew that Tom Benson would not wait, but would force the issue. Eddie understood now the foolish fellow's game. Tom had stolen, and was stealing, from his uncle; and his assistant in the office would very soon learn how he was concealing his thefts by tricky bookkeeping; so that assistant had to go in order that Tom might steal till the last minute. He saw that for this reason Father Fleming had requested him to remain, even if under a cloud.

He found a note in his room that evening after supper. It was from Benson, and ran thus:

"I want to see you and have a talk with you, and settle this trouble between us. I want to meet you where no one will see us and carry the news to the detectives whom Uncle Hurley has placed on your track. I suggest the head of the locks at the bridge about nine to-night. Come, if you wish to keep out of jail."

Eddie made his preparations and went, after enclosing Tom's letter in an envelope, which bore the

address of Uncle Hurley. He did not post it: it would arrive at its destination at the proper time. The head of the locks was a group of houses, just beside the first of the locks which helped the Erie Canal to descend to the level of the Hudson. A bridge crossed the canal at this point, a road ran below it, then a small canal, and beyond that the Falls were in full view. It was a smoky night; a warm mist or haze filled the air, and clouds obscured the moon. The slow canal boats came and went, their colored lights showing, the mules and horses breathing hard, the chatter of voices with laughing and singing rising from the decks. Eddie smiled at the choice of a meeting-place. A thug could murder a man there, drag his body to the little canal and drop it in unnoticed. But he sat on the stone pier at the end of the bridge, perfectly secure, and waited.

Tom Benson came up so quietly that Eddie did not see him until he spoke from the darkness.

"Glad you came," he said in a whisper, taking a seat beside him. "I mean business, and I hope you do."

"I do, if there's profit in it," answered Eddie.

"What did you think of the trouble to-day? The old man was stirred, wasn't he,—I mean for him? Now he has the detectives at work."

"For what?"

"For you, of course."

"For *you*, I think," said Eddie, with a chuckle.

"I fancy you won't laugh by this time to-morrow night behind the bars."

"Bad day for you when I go behind the bars," said Eddie, comfortably. "You stole that money, you fixed those books, you imitated my handwriting, and how can you get away from it?"

"Well, here's my proposition: go away at once and come back when your friends come back, if you want

to. Take a hundred dollars from me and call the fight off."

"Why should I?"

"Because it will pay you. You've got to go in the end. I have never really tried to get you out of that place till now. I am trying now, and you *must* go. It's this way," continued Benson, persuasively. "You keep on, and it will be a continued fight until Uncle Hurley gets tired of our scrapping, and lets you go for the sake of peace. Doesn't it stand to reason that he won't sack his own flesh and blood for an outsider?"

"That's what I said long ago," Eddie replied.

"It's natural of course that he should stand by his own. I'll have that business in time. He has promised it to me. It's mine now, in a way."

"I think so too," said Eddie, with more chuckling.

"Oh, well, it's all one between the owner and the heir!" Tom went on, banteringly. "You have no business there, if I don't want you. I wonder you didn't get out long ago."

"I wanted to, but Father Fleming wouldn't let me go. He said he thought that a good man like Mr. Hurley, easy and unsuspicious, might need me."

Tom Benson gave a jump at this stroke, and swore under his breath.

"What did he mean by that?"

"He didn't say," replied Eddie.

"Well, he's gone. Now will you take the money and go too?"

"And letter of recommendation also?"

"Yes."

"How shall I drop out, if I agree for the letter and a hundred?"

"Like a gentleman. Tell Uncle Hurley to-morrow that we can not agree, take your letter, here's your hundred, and go West."

He offered a roll of bills, but Eddie did not take

them, and there was silence for a moment. It was really a temptation to cut the knot in this simple fashion. The money would carry him a good ways to the golden West. He had stood two years of persecution. Why should he stand any more of it? There was never to be peace with this dishonest Benson, who would gamble and steal and lie to the end. Was it his place to reform him or to expose him, or to rescue Mr. Hurley, when the old gentleman had sense enough to rescue himself, if he kept his eyes open? It would be so easy, so pleasant, to take that money, to take his letter next day, and to take a train away from all the fighting. And then he sat up straight and said things to himself. Father Fleming and Mr. McGinnis and Vincent would come home and learn that he had run away like a coward, and that Tom Benson had "looted" his uncle's store and bank account, and brought ruin on all. How could he think of such horrors even for a lazy instant!

Tom pressed the money into his hand.

"I must think it over," said Eddie, gently.

"No: you must settle it right here to-night; for the detectives will have you to-morrow," Tom insisted.

"All right!" said Eddie, jumping to his feet. "Right here I refuse the money and the letter. I'll stay and fight till Father Fleming comes home."

And with that Tom Benson struck out with his right, calling to some one as he rushed on Eddie, who dodged him easily and slipped into the darkness. But out of that darkness leaped two stalwart ruffians, who seized Eddie with powerful hands and clapped a cloth over his mouth. And the next minute the bridge seemed to be alive with men, who fell upon the kidnappers like an avalanche, beat them to helplessness, and flung them, Benson included, from the bridge into the canal amid riotous laughter. The three came to the surface together and swam to the far side, where they crawled

out and hurried away in silence. The Lookaheads lingered chatting over the adventure, while Eddie bound them to secrecy.

"It was all planned to drug me and stow me in a canal boat bound for Buffalo," he explained. "I only suspected it, of course; but you are now witnesses to his offer of a hundred, his call for the toughs, the fight and the finish. I have the proof of his inviting me here. He has the finish."

They travelled down the road together, uproarious over that funny climax to a real kidnapping enterprise.

CHAPTER XXX

THE EXPOSURE

THE next day the two bookkeepers sat together quietly in the office as if nothing had happened, setting forth their accounts and adding up columns of figures as usual. Still, Eddie had made up his mind as to what should be done. It seemed scarcely possible that Benson should ever have conceived and carried out a scheme of kidnapping; yet Eddie reasoned that there would be constant danger from so desperate a man, and that in the end he might not stop at murder itself.

Eddie waited a week or so before carrying out his plan. The three most concerned in it lived in some sort of dread; for never a smile or a pleasant word came from Uncle Hurley, Tom or Eddie. Each seemed to feel that the end was close at hand.

It came on Saturday evening when the store closed. It was nine o'clock. Usually the bookkeepers went home earlier, but Mr. Hurley asked them to remain. A gentleman came in at nine and chatted a while with the proprietor. Shortly after, two young fellows en-

tered and asked for Eddie, who was waiting for the gentleman to go. He gave them seats in the office, and Benson just looked at them sourly. Presently Mr. Hurley came to the office with his visitor, and looked at Eddie's visitors.

"I have something of importance to say, Mr. Hurley, and I have brought these friends of mine to hear me say it," Eddie began; "but I can wait if you wish."

"No, Eddie: you may say it here and now, before this gentleman," Mr. Hurley replied; and he seemed very much cast down. "I think I know what it is."

"I am going to leave your store," said Eddie, "and I want you to know the reason why. Will you read this letter, please?"

He handed him Tom's note; and after the old gentleman had read it, Eddie told the story of the meeting at the head of the locks.

"These are my witnesses," and he pointed to the young men. "They heard the offer of a hundred dollars that was made, and saw me seized and gagged; they rescued me, and threw the kidnappers into the canal."

"This gentleman also?" said Mr. Hurley.

The stranger nodded.

No one looked at Tom, who now turned on his stool and faced his accusers with a pale face.

"I can stand a fair fight," observed Eddie; "but I can't stand this kidnapping business. It might mean murder in the end. Tom Benson has tried to make me out a thief. He tried before to show that I was a lazy, dirty, lying boy. Only for Father Fleming, I should have left here then. I must go now, because I don't want to be jailed or murdered."

"Quite right," replied Mr. Hurley. "I believe the testimony of your friends, so they may go; but I want you to stay a few minutes."

The boys departed; and Mr. Hurley waved his hand

at the stranger, who looked at the pallid, stricken Benson, and then began to talk easily and gently.

"You will understand, Mr. Benson, what I am going to say when I tell you that Mr. McGinnis handed over your case to me before he set out on his wedding tour. I have been looking after you ever since."

"You will understand still better," said Mr. Hurley, with his eyes on the floor, for he could not look at his own kin in such terrible distress, "when I tell you that both Mr. McGinnis and Father Fleming warned me of your conduct before they left, and gave me the proofs of your wild and wicked life."

"Oh, well, then," said Tom, with a forced laugh, "if that's the case, we needn't waste our time talking about it! I'll go."

He threw on his coat and took his hat, but the detective quickly showed him some handcuffs and pointed to the stool. Tom sat down, trembling with excitement and apprehension.

"We have all the proofs of your system of book-keeping," said the detective, "and some idea of how much you stole from the firm. It will save time if you write out a confession, telling when you began and how much you took and where it went. When you sign it, perhaps you may go. If you do, it must be as far West as possible."

"If you know, what's the use of a confession?" said Tom, with his accustomed impudence.

"It may save you from these little ornaments,"—and the detective showed the handcuffs.

"Oh, I see! All right!" And he seated himself on his chair, took a pen and wrote for ten minutes or more. Then he wheeled about and read in a faltering voice what he had just written.

Meanwhile his uncle, with eyes on the ground, sat sweating, wiping his brow and face at times in great anguish of mind. This was his dear sister's son who

wrote himself down a liar, a thief, a gambler, a forger, and a libertine. The poor old man could see his sister on her wedding day, simple and lovely and virtuous; and it seemed to be her voice which read this appalling confession. Tom had begun to steal from the moment he arrived in the store as a boy of fifteen; he had begun to gamble at the same time; he had taken all the money he could; he had spent it entirely in evil ways; he had hoped to pay it back, but never won enough on gambling.

✓ “You have left out a few things,” said the detective. “Put in your various attempts on the character and freedom of Edward Travers.”

Tom laughed again, but obeyed. When the detective was satisfied, the wretch signed his name at the bottom very elegantly, and watched while the others appended their names as witnesses. The detective folded the confession and placed it in his pocket. Then he looked at Mr. Hurley, who simply nodded, for he could not speak.

“You are free now to take an early train out of this town,” said the detective; “but if you are found here at any time you will run the risk of arrest. Take my advice, and get as far as you can before daylight.”

He handed Tom an envelope; and, with a cheery “Good-night!” the young man left the office and the store, where, it may be added, he was never seen again. No one spoke for a while, until Mr. Hurley wiped the last sweat from his face and looked up with a faint smile. He held out his hand to Eddie and took his in a fervent clasp.

“I shall never forget it, Eddie,” said he, in such a queer voice that the boy felt like crying. “You stood by me, you saved me from something truly awful. That unfortunate boy was going the way of

murder. You suffered, and I will pay you back."

"How did you ever get to know, Mr. Hurley?"

"I was fooled, because he was my own," said the old man. "But Father Fleming opened my eyes before he left. He came with McGinnis, and they told me the life that Tom Benson was leading, all he had done to you, all he planned to do. They gave me all the evidence needful, and I did the rest myself, with the help of this gentleman. They told me that Tom would try to destroy you, that you knew it, and that you stayed in order to save me from him, my own blood. I will never forget it; but it is terrible when your own robs you and the stranger helps you."

"Tom kept a double system of bookkeeping," said the detective, seeing that Eddie wanted some explanation; "and in that way hid his tricks. He was afraid you would find it out, and so he wanted to get rid of you."

"He would have done it only that Mr. McGinnis spoke and Father Fleming spoke," said Mr. Hurley. "You have two good friends in them, my boy; and you're worth all their praise and more. Run away now, and be ready to take full charge here Monday. I'll make up for all you suffered from Tom Benson."

So Eddie went home utterly astonished; and he went with his witnesses for guards, because no one could tell what desperate Tom might do. Oh, how it pleased him to learn that he had not been left so utterly alone as he had thought! Father Fleming had seen to his welfare, and Mr. McGinnis had nailed it safely, by their revelations of Tom's misconduct and evil intentions. Far across the ocean in Europe, they were as active in Fallville this happy night as if they had been really present, and their love and care for him disdained distance and schemes and crimes. Somewhere poor Tom Benson was tramping in the darkness,

an outcast, disgraced, eaten by his sins and his rage. "God pity and help him!" was the last prayer of Eddie as he fell into happy sleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

HAPPY HOURS

POOOR Mr. Hurley, it seemed as if he would never smile again after the departure of Tom Benson. He got old suddenly.

"It's not the money," he explained to Eddie, "even if it was twice as much; but the ungratefulness of that boy. I loved him, I made him my own, I promised him this business; I dreamed of the day when he would be in charge, making it go as I never could. I heaped him with favors; and all the time he was robbing me, deceiving me, living the life of a criminal. His confession has made him a criminal. I actually feel now like a decrepit old man."

"And no wonder," rejoined Eddie, in sympathy. "But you must get over it as quickly as you can. He was not worth your attention, and it is no good to worry over him. Take our motto: 'Look ahead.' Don't look back. The night Tom tried to kidnap me I had been looking back, and I was as blue as bluing. Yet, only a week later, all my troubles were over, and I found that my friends were as near me as if they were really at home."

"Quite right, my son! Looking back will never straighten a wry neck. It must be 'Look ahead' with me, if I'm to keep from going crazy."

"You are all alone in the house now, aren't you?" said Eddie.

"I am." And he looked at the lad with the first smile of the month.

"I was going to say, if you felt lonesome, as I often do in the boarding-house, perhaps you might like company for a little while. I could —"

"Thank you!" said Mr. Hurley quickly, when he hesitated. "Come along. You will be welcome, though I'll be poor company for any one just now."

As a matter of fact, the old man did not feel at all like seeing another boy in the place once occupied by his nephew; but he knew that grieving was hurtful to his age; that it would be better for him to have company of some sort; and that his interest in this courageous, honest boy would help him to get over his sorrow.

How glad he was after their first evening together! Eddie was that sort of person who is interested in everybody. He played with boys, he conversed pleasantly with ladies, held yarn for grandmothers, and talked business with old men. He was not at all conscious of his ability to get on with everyone: he was simply interested in what the others were interested in, and thus became attractive. He went over and over Tom Benson's career with his grieving uncle. Mr. Hurley had to tell him all about the beginnings of his life, and how he had come to America and built up his trade. In reviewing his career the scenes of youth sprang up as gay as in their prime; the merry, mischievous life of an Irish boy kept him and Eddie amused, and the two were inseparable companions for the summer. Mr. Hurley became an honorary member of the Lookaheads, and gave them a royal picnic on the Sand Bar, where he nearly laughed himself into a fit watching their antics in the water.

When the summer began to wane, the old gentleman had made up his mind perfectly about Eddie. In years his house had not seen such merriment, such joy. Tom Benson had been of a shy disposition at home, and had spent little time with his uncle. The

old man had never known the charm which a true boy casts over the heart of age until he had watched and studied Eddie coming and going for nearly three months.

When the letter came from the Radleys asking Eddie to get the house in readiness for their return, a pang shot through the old man at sight of the boy's beaming face.

"They'll not all be coming home at once," Eddie said. "Mr. and Mrs. McGinnis will arrive in September. Father Fleming will be home at Christmas. But that won't be long coming."

"The bride and groom should get a reception in their own house," said Mr. Hurley. "Have they said anything about it, Eddie?"

"Not a word, but I suppose Mrs. Radley will see to that. I wish I could give Vincent the reception he would like on coming home!"

"And what kind of a reception might that be, if I may ask?"

"His old job as secretary to Mr. Willard. He lost it by carelessness, and then he lost his foot, and afterward he lost his health. It's terrible to lose everything, Mr. Hurley."

"It is, indeed. You came very near it, and I too. We understand what it is to lose all at a stroke. What chance is there of his getting back the Willard job?"

"I've been thinking it over all summer, in the hope of having the place back when Vincent returned from the mountains. But I can't think out anything except a straight talk with Mr. Willard himself, and telling Vin's sad story."

"The very thing!" said Mr. Hurley eagerly. "I know the man well. He's as tender-hearted as a woman. I'll give you a letter of introduction, for you can't reach him in any other way."

With high hope in his kind, honest heart, Eddie pre-

sented himself and his letter the following day in the office of the great man, and was almost directly admitted into his august presence. His first remark quite confused Eddie.

"Mr. Hurley writes me," said he in a low, easy voice, as if nothing in this world mattered a cent's worth, "that you are to become his partner one of these days, which will be an important position."

"Yes, sir," replied Eddie; "I hope so, after I learn the whole business. Do you remember Vincent Radley, sir, your secretary a long time ago?"

"A charming boy indeed. It pained me to find him indifferent to his work, and to let him go. I hope he is well."

"Quite well, thank you, sir! But he has been seriously ill, for he had his foot cut off by a train. He has an artificial foot now, and you would never know his real foot had been cut off."

"They do these things very well now. Poor boy, what a misfortune!"

"And really, Mr. Willard, he was not indifferent to his position with you; but, like most boys, he thought he owned the job and couldn't lose it, and so he got careless. He has had lots of misfortune; but now he's coming back from the mountains in good health, and he must go to work; and I thought if he could get his old place under you again, what a joy it would be to him! He is the best and kindest boy you ever saw, Mr. Willard. He has changed so much no one would believe him to be the same. And he talks in his sleep of being your secretary. I'm sure he would be very satisfactory to you this time, sir."

The great man kept Eddie pleading the case of his friend much longer than he would permit a business man to talk up an important enterprise; and he kept fingering the letter of Mr. Hurley, and smiling at some of his phrases. The conclusion was that he would

consider the matter and send his decision by telephone. He shook hands with Eddie in parting, and took a long, keen look at the bright, earnest face, with its sensitive yet determined mouth.

"You have a good friend in Mr. Hurley," said he.

"Yes, sir, and he's the kindest man in the world."

"Well," said Mr. Hurley, with his broadest smile, "how did you get on? What! He kept you half an hour talking? Vincent has the job, then; and he'll find it waiting for him the night he comes home. But now, before that night arrives three days hence, I want it distinctly understood that you make no change of residence. You may sleep at Radley's whenever you wish, but my house is to be your house forever. You are to be my partner in the business, and it will go into your hands when I give up. I told you I would make up to you for what you did for me; and, on the strength of Father Fleming's recommendation, my own sense, and your past behavior, I do it now. What do you say?"

Of course Eddie agreed on the spot; for he had not looked ahead over the road of life five years without learning that such a chance does not happen to everyone. They talked the matter over in all its details, and came to a good understanding. Then Eddie opened up the Radley home on a fair afternoon in September, and stood at the door to welcome mother and son, who came home as healthy and happy as if misfortune had never touched them. Just one letter lay on the table for Vincent. He opened it immediately, at the request of Eddie, who knew very well what it contained. It was a formal reply to a formal application, and stated that Mr. Vincent Radley was again accepted as secretary to Mr. Willard. Then mother and son fell on Eddie's neck together, and the sorrow of past days vanished in the sunshine of that happy hour.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE LAST SCENES

YEARS have passed since all these events took place. But Eddie is living yet in Fallville; and the big rock is still used as a swimming-place by the boys; and the Sand Bar is still owned by Mr. McGinnis; and the Mohawk, with its fairy yachts and pleasure boats, glides on as of old.

Eddie continued to look ahead when he grew up, just as he had looked ahead when he was a boy. He now owns one hundred grocery stores in different parts of the country; he is a director in three banks. When he walks about, everyone points at him as the greatest citizen of Fallville; and the great detective still thinks him the most wonderful boy on earth. One could go on talking about him all day and far into the night; but of what use would it be, since we now know him to be the kindest, noblest, most loving fellow in the land,—one who could no more desert a friend, or forget a sufferer, or neglect his business and his duty, than he could remember his own pleasure in anything? But as we all like to know how people went on in life after we have moved away from their neighborhood, I will give a few scenes in which Eddie figured years afterward, when he had become a great man.

Here is a beautiful brick building, just across from Father Fleming's church. It is three stories high, and its big entrance on this particular evening is ablaze with light. People are crowding in by the main entrance; the windows are illuminated, and the sound of music is heard. Inside a merry crowd is going up and down the stairs, through the rooms, examining everything—the library, the gymnasium, the swimming-pool, the recreation halls,—and pronouncing all per-

fect. Young men with badges on their coats, handsome fellows in their best attire, are acting as ushers. They are the members of the Lookahead Club, and this is the new building which their first president has built for them with his own money.

After a while the crowd assembles in the grand hall, which seats six hundred people. The music plays, the people chat, and then the curtain goes up on the stage, and discovers a group of men whom everybody cheers. Would you know the man with the kind dark eyes, whose dark hair and beard half conceal him from you? Of course you would, because once the kindness of that face is seen it is never forgotten. That is Eddie Travers, now grown up, but just the same as he was fifteen years ago. The big fellow with golden hair and red beard, handsome as he can be, is Vincent Radley, as good and kind and patient as after he met with calamity. And the elegant gentleman with the rose in his coat, and the diamond pin in his olive-green tie, and his white gloves and "spats," — why, that's Harold of course, the New York banker.

The president of the Lookahead Club, a young man who is very nervous because he has to make a speech, leads them all to their seats, where they wait until the last member of the group comes on,— Father Fleming himself. They have all changed, but he looks precisely the same as twenty years before. His hair is thin, there are wrinkles around his eyes, and one can guess that he is getting old; but he dresses as well, he walks as lightly, and he speaks and laughs as gaily as ever he did. What cheers when he enters, what applause when he speaks! He goes over the story of old times, full of praise for the boys of long ago; and he winds up with compliments to Harold and Vincent and Edward, saying of the last:

"There never was a boy who looked so far ahead as Eddie, never a boy who won a fortune so quickly,

and certainly there never was a boy so ready to spend his fortune for the good of others."

Then Eddie made a beautiful speech (he was so used to it, you know, at banquets and other gatherings of great men), and his finest compliment was for Father Fleming:

"He taught me and encouraged me to look along the road of life, through the door of death, and across the beautiful road of heaven; never to linger or idle by the wayside, and never to lose sight of the heavenly home. In giving him this building, I am only paying the first instalment of the debt under which he has placed me."

The young president of the Club made a speech, accepting the building in behalf of the members, and congratulating the Lookaheads on their great associate. Then Vincent Radley spoke in his easy way, smoothing his beard with his hand. And last of all Harold addressed the assembly, after he had touched up his rose, fixed his tie, smoothed his gloves, and seen that his hair was properly placed. Some one called for Mr. McGinnis, but he always declined to speak in public.

That is the first scene — one of joy and success,— and the other is much the same. This time it is in the church, where a great crowd has assembled. The sun shines against the illuminated windows, the organ resounds, the sanctuary is filled with priests and bishops, and the centre of it all is Father Fleming. He is now a really old man,— fifty years a priest, and this is his Golden Jubilee. But he does not look much older than before. His step is light, his voice is sweet and strong, and he will live ten years yet. He glances around with joy and pride at the sanctuary, which is his work. Glorious pictures of Our Lord in His Resurrection look down upon you from the concave wall. The bishop, from the high pulpit, speaks of Father

Fleming and his work. He is an old man with silver hair and wonderful voice, whose words penetrate like fire; and what high praise he pours upon the priest for his years of service to God and to the people!

When everything is over, two gentlemen leave the first pew and enter the sanctuary to stand before the pastor. You know Eddie at once, but you do not know the other until you look more closely. He is only fifteen, though nearly as tall as his father. And when he turns his face on you, the tears fill your eyes; for here is Eddie Travers come back again from the land of youth,—the same boy with the pale face and the sad eyes and the sweet, sensitive mouth. How wonderful are the ways of God, who thus renews in each generation the beloved sights of the dead past! The father reads an address and the son presents a little packet. It is the second great testimony of a boy's love and gratitude. Father Fleming pouts with his underlip, as he always does when he is affected; and he accepts the packet and the address in a few words. He knows that the new school just built will be henceforth known as the Travers Memorial, Eddie's gift to that beloved father and mother who left him long, long ago on the road of life, but whose prayers found him such a mother as Mrs. Radley and such a father as this faithful old priest. And the second scene passes away.

The third scene is entirely different, although the details are pretty much the same. Here is Cataract Street again; and there are the Falls in full view at the north end, tumbling and roaring from the violence of the floods of spring. The Radley home, however, has vanished from the place. In its stead rises an imposing building, with fine grounds, a grand entrance, a bronze bust over the door, and a crowd of people moving about after the ceremony. There have been speeches and a luncheon; and the centre of the scene

has been that same boy who always looked ahead into the future, planning for great days. Twenty years ago he dreamed of this very scene on Cataract Street, just as he dreamed of the new club and the Travers Memorial School. To-day the Fleming Memorial Hospital is a fact; he has presented it to its trustees, endowed with a good income, and the bronze bust of his friend and benefactor stands over the door.

When the ceremony is concluded the Travers party drive away along the main road to the south end of the city. What a host of them,—the families of Sullivan, Radley, Travers, and McGinnis, parents and children! On reaching the churchyard, they walk like pilgrims to the highest spot and kneel down, while the head of the family recites the prayers for the departed. Then they all gather about the monument, which they have seen before, but can not see too often. It is a simple stone carrying a beautiful bronze tablet, on which, in relief, is a good portrait of Father Fleming leading a boy by the hand from a swampy place, while he points to a safe road above. And the legend on the stone reads:

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REVEREND THOMAS SYLVESTER FLEMING
FROM EDWARD

A little girl traces with her finger the figure of the boy.

“Is that really you, papa?”

“Yes, dear,—when I was little and poor.”

“And this is really and truly Father Fleming, papa?”

“Really and truly, pet, as we remember him,—even to the pout of the underlip,” Eddie says to the others gazing with sadness on the figure in bronze.

A canal bounds the place on the west, a railroad on

the east, and the four men have the same thought as they walk to their carriages. It was Vincent's tragedy that brought them all together in such friendship, and bound them forever to the holy soul whose mortal part lay there in the mould.

THE END

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